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British Foreign Policy Under Canning

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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER CANNING

By

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Thesis

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History

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This paper is an examination of British foreign policy under the guidance of George Canning. As foreign minister from 1822-1827, Canning pursued a conservative and traditionally British policy. Canning was loved by liberals across Europe for achieving several liberal goals. Yet Canning himself was not interested in promoting liberalism, he sought only to further the interests of Britain. Canning worked to disentangle Britain from the Congress System, and pursue goals in the British national interest.

The major focus of this work is to examine Canning's policy during three major crises of his tenure. Each crisis involved revolution and ideology. Yet Canning promoted non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. Canning tried to co-operate with the other powers over solutions to these problems, but was willing to forego his allies when they threatened policy objectives. By the end of his life, he had altered the balance of power in Europe to Britain's favor.

The first major crisis was over Revolution in Spain. Canning's allies wanted to put down the revolution and restore the king. The Congress of Verona approved French intervention, over British objections. Canning successfully managed to protect British interests while preventing the war from escalating. Canning also worked to stabilize Portugal, as it faced its own political reform and civil war.

The Spanish Empire in the Americas was reaching the end of a long process of gaining independence. Canning moved slowly but surely to recognize these new republics, and worked to prevent other European powers from seizing them. Canning recognized these new states and normalized relations with them. More importantly for Britain, Canning helped to ensure British commercial access to Latin America, helping to ensure a century of British economic control of the region.

The final crisis centered on the Greek uprising against their Ottoman rulers. Canning remained neutral for much of the conflict. Yet when Russia seemed on the verge of war, Canning worked to intervene with Russia and France to impose a settlement on the Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, Canning's treaty led to naval intervention and left the door open for Russia to go to war.

INTRODUCTION

The Congress of Vienna ended over twenty years of nearly constant warfare between Great Britain and France. It was the last major conflict in the intense rivalry, the 2nd Hundred Years' War, between these two nations spanning several centuries. The massive wars of Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France had been a watershed diplomatically, leading to the creation of the unprecedented Quadruple Alliance. France was soon added to the Alliance as well, making the Quintuple Alliance. The American Revolution and especially the French Revolution had changed the landscape of political thought across Europe, creating the left-right dynamic. New democratic ideals were fostered by the Enlightenment then spread by the wars of the Revolution and Napoleon throughout a Europe still dominated by dynastic monarchies. In Great Britain itself, the Industrial Revolution altered older economic patterns and changed the relationship of between Great Britain and the rest of the world. The late eighteenth century and the years leading into 1815 had created new forces and new ideals that fundamentally changed the landscape of Europe.

In the period following the Congress of Vienna, despite these massive changes in the political and economic landscape, British foreign policy remained deeply rooted in the traditional notions of balance of power on the Continent, British dominion of the seas, and colonial expansion. British policy after 1815 was very similar to English policy during the reign of William and Mary. Britain's insular position gave them protection from other states, so long as their navy could defend the English Channel. English history and institutions had fostered ideals of limited government and individual rights.

Britain was seen as protected from the democratic fervor unleashed in France, for they already enjoyed many of its aspirations. The threat from the Continent was perceived to be a hegemonic state capable of dominating Europe, whether it was the Spanish Hapsburgs, Louis XIV, or Napoleon.

While the world and Great Britain had dramatically changed since the seventeenth century, the policy of the state, which it had successfully pursued for several centuries, remained intact and barely shaken by the world around it. Britain had withstood the storms of Absolutism and now Revolution. Rather than fearing social and intellectual change, they only feared a state strong enough to cross the Channel and destroy the British state. Rather than getting involved in all the conflicts and rivalries of the Continent, Britain could follow a policy of only interfering when one state threatens to dominate the rest.

British foreign policy was decided mainly by the foreign minister, the prime minister, and the Cabinet. They directed foreign affairs and were primarily responsible for its conduct. Yet other factors such as the king, the Parliament, and public opinion shaped the direction of foreign policy in subtle and not so subtle ways. The king for instance was responsible for asking a member of Parliament to form the Cabinet. Parliament ratified treaties and could effectively bring down an unpopular Cabinet. The main architect of foreign policy following the Congress of Vienna was the British representative at that Congress, Lord Castlereagh. He had formed close relationships with many foreign leaders and worked smoothly with them for the most part. Along with Clemens von Metternich of Austria, Castlereagh guided much of the diplomacy of

Europe.

Castlereagh's suicide in 1822 left an opening for a new foreign minister, one that was filled by George Canning, who retained the position until 1827, the year of his ascension to prime minister and of his untimely death. George Canning was a solid Tory, follower of Pitt the Younger and Burke. Canning strongly believed in the unreformed Parliament that had guided England for centuries. He had served as foreign minister during the war and other non-Cabinet positions. The choice of Canning brought a new style and form to foreign ministry, but in the end resulted in a very similar foreign policy to that Castlereagh had adopted. He had worked closely with Castlereagh on foreign policy before resigning his Cabinet post in 1820 over the treatment of Queen Caroline. Their foreign policy was focused on a balance of power in Europe, which meant operating within the Quintuple Alliance and the furthering of British interests around the globe. His policy was a traditional policy which built on over a century of experience. Canning made his policy much more transparent than Castlereagh's, and expounded on it in fiery public speeches. Important issues surrounding his term as foreign and then prime minister revolve around how Canning dealt with the Allies, and how Great Britain responded to revolutions in Latin America, Spain, and Greece. This paper will focus on the foreign policy of George Canning, and his interactions with the great and lesser powers of his day.

Historians of the period vary on how they treat Canning's foreign policy. Some have lauded him as the most eminent statesmen of his or any other time. Others have downplayed his significance claiming he built mainly on the policy of Castlereagh, who

modified his policy near the end of his life in response to the changing nature of the Alliance.

The first major history of Canning was done by Stapleton in 1887, and this was probably the most unbalanced and laudatory piece written. Stapleton sees Canning as the main protagonist in a massive struggle for liberty against the diabolical plans of Metternich and the rest of the Holy Alliance. In his view, Canning had stood up for the small nations of Europe against the Goliath of the Holy Alliance. Stapleton writes that “He [Canning] sympathised with the oppressed nations of Europe, and profoundly resented the action of the vast military confederacy which crushed the liberties and overwhelmed struggling peoples on the continent¹.” As will be seen, Canning worked closely with the Allies, including Metternich at times. He made no attempt to help the “struggling peoples”, and had a very low opinion of revolutionaries. This interpretation overplays the importance of the Holy Alliance and Canning’s role in ending it. Canning was much more interested in preserving peace through a balance of power, rather than acting as a bold champion of liberty against the tyranny. This portrait of Canning standing firm against the Holy Alliance falls apart on examination, yet still holds some sway over other historians of Canning.

Harold Temperley, as opposed to Stapleton, was a trained historian who spent much of his life researching and writing on the career of Canning. His views on Canning changed over the course of his career from a fervent disciple to a moderate position. In his early years, Temperley was interested in proving the great importance of Canning,

¹Augustus Granville Stapleton, *The Political Life of the Right Honorable George Canning* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1831), 9.

especially as compared to Castlereagh. He was caught up in a competition to prove Canning the superior foreign minister. Temperley early on sounds much like Stapleton: His [Canning's] foresight now told him that in the present instance they [Congresses] could lead to the interference of only one kind, that of a coalition of despots against tyranny². Here Temperley raises the image of Canning as champion facing down the "despots" of the Holy Alliance. He continues that No statesmen could have contended for a cause more liberal, more just, or more essential to the existence of individual nationalities³. Early on Temperley saw Canning as a liberal champion squaring off against eastern despots.

Later on however Temperley came to terms with his chief rival, Webster, the biographer of Castlereagh, leading to moderation in their stances and later even collaboration. Temperley admits that Canning pursued a similar foreign policy as Castlereagh had, while Webster concedes that Canning had played an important role in foreign policy in the last few years of Castlereagh's life⁴. Temperley reflects the change in the historiography of Canning from one of adulation to a more tempered approach that while admitting his achievements, grounds them firmly in policies and positions Canning inherited.

Charles Petrie, writing about the same time as Temperley's last book appeared,

² Harold William Vazeille Temperley, *Life of Canning* (New York: Haskell House, 1968) 9.

³ Ibid, p 271.

⁴ Harold William Vazeille Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827; England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), preface.

gives a different perspective on Canning's policy. Petrie writes on the achievements of Canning, but rather than make him into a champion of liberty, contends that the "Difference between their conduct of affairs [Canning's and Castlereagh's] was dictated by changing circumstances rather than by any fundamental conflict of principles⁵".

Petrie sees Canning as continuing the policies of Castlereagh for the most part, and by extension not creating a radically new approach to dealing with other nations. Canning is not portrayed as some liberal protagonist, but as British statesmen continuing the policy of Castlereagh.

Later historians tend to judge Canning's career less and less, and focus more on the facts of his career. The best example of this is the last major work written on Canning in 1976 by Peter Dixon. Throughout the book, he recounts the details of Canning's career with virtually no judgement or overview. While Dixon writes a good narrative of the events of Canning's career, the reader is given no context. Only at the end of his book does one find small evidence as to what Dixon actually thinks of Canning. For example he writes that Canning had "outwitted Metternich⁶", yet it is not clear whether he mean some sort of grand strategy for control of Europe, breaking up the Holy Alliance, or simply the Greek question when Canning worked with Russia and France to isolate Metternich. Is Dixon playing into the old archetype of Metternich as evil genius and Canning as liberal mastermind? Dixon himself does not answer many questions surrounding the importance of Canning's career. He finally concludes that

⁵Charles Petrie, *George Canning* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946), 168.

⁶Peter Dixon, *Canning, Politician and Statesman* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 245.

Canning pursued the national interests of Great Britain, which sometimes coincided with liberal views of the day. Canning used liberal ideas in his speeches to dress them up for public consumption, but his views were essentially pragmatic⁷. This approach fails to answer wider question as to what the importance of Canning's policies were and how they fit into the larger history of the period and Britain.

This paper will look at the tenure of Canning as foreign minister and prime minister from 1822-1827. It will seek to understand Canning's policies and how they interacted with the wider world. For instance, what did Canning hope to achieve or avoid, what tools did Canning use for these results, and what end results came about from these policies? Hopefully by the end, the reader will have a better understanding of the details and facts, but more importantly the wider significance of Canning.

Many of the sources used were secondary sources either about Canning specifically, or more generally about the period or British government. Unfortunately much of the secondary literature is rather dated, 1976 being the last year a major work was published on Canning. Other newer sources tend to be general in nature. There are also many primary sources, the majority of these focusing on either letters between the major figures surrounding Canning or diplomatic letters including correspondence to and from British ambassadors abroad. Other primary sources include speeches and Parliamentary debates, yet the very public natures of these tend to invite rhetoric. The private letters tend to be both more forthcoming and less reliant on political appeals and imagery. The story of Canning as speech-giver or political operator are interesting

⁷Ibid, p 252-253.

stories, yet this paper will focus mostly on Canning the policymaker. Where it is possible, primary sources have been preferred over secondary ones. These sources do not tell the whole story; private conversations, especially between Canning and the king or Canning and foreign ambassadors are not recorded unless alluded to in other sources. These conversations may tell a reader much about how policy was conducted and what passed among these men, which was not recorded. Yet unfortunately one cannot know how these men interacted and must rely on those written sources. Details on the private life of Canning or other figures are almost entirely absent as well. While these types of evidence can provide a fuller picture of the intricacies of Canning's life, they are of limited value for examining his foreign policy.

Foreign sources would have been also very helpful at arriving at a more complete picture of how Canning conducted foreign policy. There are very few foreign sources included within the primary ones, and the barrier of language prevents a more than cursory attempt to tackle foreign archival material. So this is the story of Canning largely told by British sources. The shape of other countries' policy can only be seen roughly in the primary sources, through reports from British ambassadors or their public actions. Understanding exactly why the French or Russians or Austrians did certain things would have provided more light on why events unfolded as they did, and not as certain people thought they might. Canning nor any other of the major figures who helped shaped foreign policy had inside access to foreign sources. They too could only conjecture what their rivals were up to or how far they plotted secretly.

Diplomatic history during this period was the story of an elite few white males

determining the fate of millions. On the British side there was Canning and the rest of the Cabinet, the king and his advisors, British ambassadors and envoys abroad, Parliamentary members who cared enough to follow foreign affairs, and a select few friends of Canning. All told, perhaps only a few hundred men in Britain had any real role in conducting foreign affairs, despite the ever-present public opinion that could sometimes shape policy. When one looks abroad, that figure diminishes: in Prussia and Austria only those in the upper echelons of government controlled policy, while in Russia only the tsar and his chosen advisors had any real control. In every country concerned, even the United States to a great extent, politics, and especially foreign policy, in the early nineteenth century was still the preserve of elites. While this was slowly changing, for example one can look at Canning's public addresses as a new way of pursuing policy, it had not yet changed enough to break the elite's hold.

The reader should remember that this is a story of a few controlling war or peace, and the futures of millions of subjects. For the average British subject, foreign policy probably had very little role; yet when war broke out they could be called upon to sacrifice their lives. For merchants there might be more importance, especially if they traded with other nations. The most import mercantile interests made their interests known to government, but could only influence policy from the outside through the political system. For most Britons, as today for most citizens around the world, foreign policy was outside their radar and had little significance beyond the occasional crisis and war.

Also the reader should keep in mind that the diplomacy of this period was based

on a long history of development in Europe. The system where each nation exchanged representatives under the protection of diplomatic immunity did not develop overnight. Only during the early modern period and sometimes even later, did these states become recognizable as nation-states rather than dynastic ones. Effective diplomacy required a centralized government structure that could control the use of force.

The professionalization of the diplomatic corps was a long process. There is not enough space here to go into this history, yet it is relevant to how diplomacy was carried out and organized by the Great Powers. The United Kingdom also practiced diplomacy differently than the other Great Powers. The constitutional monarchy was established differently and was responsive to different pressures than their Allies. Canning's good friend Bagot puts it well to the Russian tsar when he told him "of the power of the public voice in England ... the particular nature of our institutions rendered a complete unity of councils or measures with other Powers absolutely impossible upon certain points⁸."

British ministers and diplomats were beholden to Parliament and the British people. They could not behave in the same way as Continental counterparts, since their actions had to be defended publicly in front of Parliament rather than to a king behind closed doors.

This paper is organized into four major chapters, each dealing with a major aspect of Canning's foreign policy. The first chapter deals with Canning's biography and his role within the government of the time. A few domestic issues important to Canning's career are briefly addressed, since a full description of these circumstances would be a

⁸Josceline Bagot, letter to Canning Dec 17, 1823, in *George Canning and His Friends*, ed. Josceline Bagot (London: J. Murray, 1909), 203-204.

paper unto itself. The rest of the paper deals with certain crisis or major problems facing Great Britain during 1822-1827. Canning spent most of his time and effort dealing with these issues as they had the most potential to spiral into war. The second chapter deals with the Revolutions and invasions of the Iberian Peninsula, first in Spain and then potentially in Portugal. The third chapter deals with the New World and British involvement in the independence of the Latin American Republics. The fifth chapter deals with the conflict over Greece in the Ottoman Empire, with the threat of Russian armies looming nearby. All of these different chapters seem to deal with peripheral areas, yet as will be seen they are concerns for all the Great Powers. In each situation, Great Britain was forced to work either with or against its Allies, while pursuing interests that were uniquely its own. It is hoped that one will find that through the lens of these crisis, the reader can understand how Canning pursued foreign policy and its results.

CHAPTER ONE – CANNING THE POLITICIAN

Biography

Canning was born in 1770 to an unsuccessful merchant, who abandoned the family and died shortly afterwards. His mother, who raised him during his early years, was an actress of little note, and if it were not for the generosity of his uncle, no one would probably know the name George Canning. As it was, Canning was sent by his uncle to Eton and then Christ Church College at Oxford. His origins were never to be forgotten in aristocratic England, despite his later entry into political life. After graduating with a law degree in 1791, Canning decided to enter politics, and chose to follow the Tory Pitt, rather than the Whig Fox, to whom his family had connections.

Canning first received some fame at university as co-author of the Jacobin Papers, which excoriated the radicals who then led the French Revolution. His background and connections from Oxford allowed him to meet Pitt the Younger, who managed to get Canning a pocket borough in the Isle of Wight. These districts of the unreformed Parliament were easily given out by political leaders to their supporters, reinforcing the system of patronage in British political life. In Parliament Canning earned a reputation for his Anti-Jacobin stance, his commitment to war against France, as well as his oratory skills. One of Canning's friends, upon his appointment to office in 1816, writes "It is his battles with this monster [Jacobism] that he is always great and most useful⁹". Canning was not a champion of revolution at anytime during his life. He held several minor offices in government including a short stint as Undersecretary of State, essentially

⁹Bagot, letter to Binning June 16, in *George Canning and Friends*, p 18.

assistant to the Foreign Minister. His close relationship to Pitt meant his career followed that of his patron, even to the point of leaving a Cabinet-level office when Pitt was forced out, even though Pitt himself said it was unnecessary. Besides following Pitt, Canning also became a fervent admirer of Edmund Burke, taking to heart his views of conservatism and the French Revolution. Burke also taught Canning the importance of tradition in the British government, hardening his opposition to reform and revolution.

Later Canning decided not to accept the pocket borough, and ran for election in Liverpool, a growing industrial town and competitive borough. Canning won thanks to his skill as an orator and the backing of influential merchants such as Gladstone's father. He would sit for this borough throughout most of his tenure as foreign minister.

Meanwhile Canning followed Pitt into office, receiving his first major appointment as Foreign Minister in 1806. Yet there was little scope for him to make his mark, since Britain was in a non-negotiable war with France and the War Minister, who happened to be Castlereagh, had much more influence over policy. This began a rather long rivalry with Castlereagh that culminated in a duel in which Canning was slightly injured. As foreign minister, his most important act was the capture of the Danish Fleet. Denmark, which was still officially neutral, was very close to French troops in Germany. Canning decided to violate Denmark's neutrality in order to capture its fleet ahead of Napoleon, and while this sent Denmark into Napoleon's orbit, it was a toothless Denmark without its fleet. British forces seized Copenhagen after three days of bombardment, managing to capture the Danish fleet. This was hailed in Britain as a success when they were still hard

to come by against a Napoleon near the height of his influence¹⁰.

Canning left office in 1807, when the Whig took over, and after this served only in minor offices until 1822. He was diplomat to Portugal for a short period, which was considered a political exile. Pitt's death and the end of the war left Canning in a political wilderness, although he had experience in high office, many Tories did not trust him. One major reason was his position on Catholic Emancipation. The story of Catholicism and England is a long and bloody one, yet by this time the Irish, who were under British rule at the time, were the most affected. Canning felt Catholic Emancipation was necessary in order to keep Ireland within the Union, yet much of Parliament including most high-ranking members of the Tories and the king were dead-set against Catholic Emancipation. Parliament was weakly in favor of it, with measures for Catholic Emancipation passing the House of Commons several times in the 1810's and 1820's only to be struck down by the House of Lords. The issue was so contentious that Lord Liverpool, on assuming the position of prime minister in 1812, promised not to raise it as an issue in Cabinet or before Parliament. Canning was only later able to enter office because of this truce, but the fact his advocacy of Catholic Emancipation always drew the ire of the so-called 'Ultras' led by the Duke of Wellington¹¹.

In 1822 Canning was appointed to a position in India, but received a better position while waiting for his ship to sail. Castlereagh, made Lord Londonderry in 1821,

¹⁰All this basic biographical information can be found in any of the biographies of Canning, the most thorough in P.J.V. Rolo, *George Canning: Three Biographical Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1965) and Temperley, *The Life of Canning*, or in more polemical form in Stapleton, *Political Life of the Right Honorable George Canning*.

¹¹All the biographies talk extensively about the Catholic Question, Rolo, *George Canning* and Temperley, *The Life of Canning* have the most comprehensive explanations.

had committed suicide. The Cabinet and king were in a quandary over who could replace him. First one must look at the make-up of the Cabinet to understand the problem. The Prime Minister Lord Liverpool was mostly a placeholder, who held little authority of his own but was popular enough among all groups to be chosen. This arrangement was not too uncommon in Britain, yet it was unusual for someone like Liverpool to stay in office as long as he did (1812-1827). The largest faction in the Cabinet was represented by the 'Ultras' led by the Duke of Wellington, as Master General of the Ordinance. Three other Ultra members were Westmorland as Lord Privy Seals, Bathhurst as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Sidmouth as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Another important Cabinet member was Peel the Home Secretary. The Cabinet had little unity or identity, rather it was a mixture of various Tory figures. To replace Castlereagh, they wanted a man with experience. The government of Liverpool was not a popular one, and had been on the verge of falling apart since its creation. They needed someone popular within Parliament to join the Cabinet, and someone who could support the government's position ably in the House of Commons. Canning also had a mark against him for his former relationship with the estranged Queen Caroline, whom the King had scandalously tried to divorce in 1820. The appointment of Canning could be a sign of his reconciliation on this issue, but did not endear him to either King or Cabinet.

In the end Canning was appointed Foreign Secretary and also took over the role of Leader of the House of Commons from Castlereagh. As Leader of Commons, Canning was expected to help pass government proposals along with his ministerial duties. His appointment was during a critical time shortly before the Congress of Verona, of which

there is more below. Canning quickly established a close working relationship with Lord Liverpool, and for the remainder of his tenure as Foreign Secretary he virtually set foreign policy alone with the whole-hearted support of Liverpool. By January of the following year, during a Cabinet reshuffle, Canning managed to arrange for two of his supporters to also enter the Cabinet, Robinson as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Huskisson on Board of Trade. His position thus strengthened, Canning achieved a position of great influence and could firmly direct foreign policy.

Domestic Politics

This was a period of transition and the dissolution of the two-party system that had dominated Great Britain since the 1688 Glorious Revolution. The traditional Whig/Tory alignment was under stress and splitting, and this was reflected in the Tory party of the time by the differences between Canning and his supporters and Wellington and the Ultras. The Tory party had lost any sort of unifying program, and was by this time little more than a convenient grouping for those who were not Whigs. This divide was reflected mainly in domestic issues, the most important being the reform of Parliament, free trade, and Catholic Emancipation. By the 1830's and into the 1840's, the parties would entirely break up leading to the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Most of the major domestic issues remained unresolved during Canning tenure, left to fester or frustrated by the House of Lords. For example a reduction in the Corn Laws was passed the House of Commons only to be stymied by the House of Lords. Canning managed to

shored up support for an unpopular Cabinet of Tories, yet by the time he became Prime Minister he could not bring the Ultras along with him.

Another issue driven by domestic concerns was the abolition of the slave trade. Pressure from different private organizations and important figures such as Wilberforce created a movement for both abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself. Great Britain had already abolished the slave trade, and was interested in signing treaties with other nations to do likewise, partially from pressure from West Indian merchants to level the playing field. It is rather surprising the lengths the British went towards abolishing the slave trade, including the Foreign Office going over disputes concerning specific ships with other nations. There is copious material on the slave trade from this period, yet it rarely ever had an impact on other foreign policy issues. Other nations sometimes abolished the slave trade to appease the British, as Spain tried shortly before a French invasion to try to convince Great Britain to help them. Yet for the most part, the negotiations over the slave trade had little impact on the rest of the foreign policy of Great Britain.

These issues were not very contentious, yet other policies of Canning were much more so. Further below issues touching upon Revolution and Legitimacy will be discussed, and it is sufficient here to say that Canning differed with many of his Allies and even his colleagues in Cabinet over policy and form. These differences led to some rather vicious rhetoric directed against Canning as well as an underhanded plot to remove him from office. Fortunately for Canning both his popularity and the constitutional nature of British government made this very hard to accomplish.

Some of Canning most intractable opponents were members of his own Tory party. The so-called Ultras resented his style and many of his policies, and tolerated him at best because they knew they needed his support in Parliament. Cathcart, a friend of Canning, summarizes the situation by saying the Ultras hope “that the dreadful liberal taint is soon to be totally removed from the Cabinet¹².” Even though Canning was a Tory, his views on Catholic Emancipation, free trade, and even his background made him unpalatable to the very conservative, aristocratic wing of the Tories. They hoped to do away with Canning and form a purely Protestant (opposed to Catholic Emancipation) government hopefully headed by the Duke of Wellington. Canning faced difficulties in dealing with the King as well: one example of the King’s meddling was over the British ambassador to Paris. The King had been encouraging Canning to dismiss him for over two years, yet when Canning finally did so the King objected that the language of the dismissal letter was too harsh¹³. King George IV was also at odds at times with Canning over policy, especially over the issue of recognition of Latin American Republics. The king opposed recognizing the new republics and worked to convince the Cabinet not to consent to it¹⁴. Even though the king had no control over the Cabinet, he had informal influence over many of those in government. Beyond Great Britain, there was even more hatred for Canning, driven by his positions over Spain and the New World republics.

The opposition to Canning culminated in a conspiracy to remove him from office.

¹²*George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 279.

¹³*Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Edward Stapleton (London: Longmans, Green, 1887) p 169.

¹⁴Wendy Hinde, *George Canning* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1974), 369-370.

The details are fuzzy, and most of the evidence for this conspiracy comes from Canning and his friends rather than the conspirators. It is difficult to figure out exactly who participated, or who they could have possibly replaced him with and still been able to control Parliament. It seems to have begun in 1824 when Canning sensed a conspiracy gaining ground against him and said he does not want Lord Liverpool involved in any way¹⁵. Canning followed this letter with one on how the Ultra cabinet-member Westmorland was scheming behind his back on recognition of the Latin American Republics¹⁶. Westmorland and perhaps other Ultras, maybe even the Duke of Wellington, were likely involved. Perhaps even the King himself may have been involved, Canning later claims he had evidence the King was conducting foreign affairs behind his back.

Despite the conjectural nature of this conspiracy, it is clear that Canning himself felt he was being conspired against and had evidence of this conspiracy. Events came to a head in early 1825 when Canning, feeling confident he had uncovered the conspiracy, began to take action against it. He wrote to his close friend Granville that he had evidence that behind the entire conspiracy was Metternich, whom he described as “The greatest rogue and liar on the Continent, perhaps the civilized world¹⁷.” Canning claimed that Metternich, not working in official capacity, had conspired with the Austrian and Russian ambassadors in London and several Ultras. Canning said that if the plan had come to fruition, he would have been forced to reveal the evidence to Parliament and the

¹⁵ *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Stapleton, 171.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 173.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 257-259.

press, claiming the King and the Holy Alliance had forced him from office. In an audience with the King, Canning revealed his evidence and made a similar threat. As events did not go that far, it is unclear exactly what sort of evidence he had or what eventually happened to it. Much about this conspiracy is unclear, yet in the end nothing came of the whole affair. It shows the hatred, or at least perceived hatred, Canning saw from other major figures he had to deal with on a near daily basis.

The strangest part of the whole story was how relations improved for Canning with several ‘conspirators’ shortly after the whole affair. The Lievens, especially the wife, became close friends with Canning. The Countess Lieven even helped to work improve relations with Russia on a trip to St. Petersburg, paving the way for the St. Petersburg Protocol discussed below. The King for his part took Canning further into his confidence. Canning writes “I am now upon that footing with H.M. [His Majesty] that enables me to approach him with details which on a more distant and merely official footing I should not¹⁸.” In the same letter Canning reveals that he had finally gained access to the Hanoverian intelligence the King was privy to, which traditionally had been shared with the foreign minister, but had been denied to him. By the end of his tenure the King was praising Canning for his ability: “[Canning] had placed this country in a position with respect to Europe in which it had never stood before, that the maintenance of the country in that situation depends on Mr. Canning’s continuance¹⁹.” Of course praise from a King can sometimes be empty, especially since the King was growing to

¹⁸Ibid, p 297.

¹⁹*Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Stapleton, p 279.

rely more upon Canning and seeing him as a potential Prime Minister.

The story of Canning's rise to Prime Minister was a tumultuous and ultimately sad story. Liverpool, after suffering a stroke in 1827, died shortly thereafter. The strawman who had kept the Tories in government together was gone. In the Cabinet there were only three figures prominent enough to succeed him: the Duke of Wellington, Robert Peel, and Canning. Peel removed his name from consideration, and warned he could not in good faith serve under Canning considering his views on Catholic Emancipation. That left the Duke of Wellington and Canning, each representing a wing of the Tory party. It was unclear whether either could form a government without the participation of the other. When the King finally decided on Canning, the news was followed by a wave of resignations in Cabinet, including some Canning had thought might stay. Canning was therefore forced to form an almost completely new Cabinet.

Canning at first tried to form an entirely Tory government based on an agreement that there would be no official government stance on Catholic Emancipation. Yet he could not find the necessary support especially since the Ultras flatly refused to serve under him. Canning, secretly at first, met with moderate Whig leaders. He was forced by circumstances to form a government which included Whigs, predicated on an agreement not to push for Parliamentary reform²⁰. It is unclear how successfully this mixed government would have been over the long-term, whether it could have weathered the storms that split the parties or the push for Parliamentary reform. Canning did not have

²⁰For the best descriptions of the events leading to Canning's government Temperley's *Life of Canning* or Arthur Aspinall, *Formation of Canning's Ministry February to August 1827* (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1937) have the most comprehensive information.

the time left to experiment. For several years he had become increasingly sick and had taken longer vacations for health reasons. It is not entirely clear what he had, perhaps gout or maybe tuberculosis. Whatever the cause, Canning died in August 1827, setting the record for the shortest term of any British Prime Minister at 119 days. He died in same room Fox had died in, but was buried next to Pitt at Westminster Abbey with the full decorations of office.

This chapter has told the story of the political backdrop of Canning career. These issues were always present while Canning formulated foreign policy, restraining him and helping to shape his policies to a certain extent. Canning was forced to strike a balance between keeping the Tories in his Cabinet appeased and ensuring a Parliamentary majority that kept the government in power and capable of action. Canning had to work against the slave trade, help facilitate free trade, and remember the consequences at home of any policy decision. His foreign policy was therefore constrained by the possible. He had to convince the Cabinet and Parliament on the effectiveness of his policy. This situation in of itself goes a long way in explaining Canning's moderate foreign policy firmly grounded in the traditions of British diplomacy.

It is also important to get some idea of what kind of man Canning had been. His past as the son of an actress was never forgotten by the Ultras. His role as a vehement anti-Jacobin shaped how he viewed Revolution, but never blinded him to the dangers of monarchy as well. At times Canning was in fact surrounded by enemies, and one can see how earlier historians saw him as a liberal champion facing the wrath of Reactionaries. Yet this is much too simplistic a view, especially given that Canning was in fact a Tory.

He carefully warned against seeing things as basically bipolar, liberal versus conservative or republican versus monarchist: “If things are prevented from going to extremities it must be by *our* keeping a distinct middle ground between the two conflicting Bigotries and staying the plague both ways²¹.” This is hardly the diatribe of liberal fanatic or conversely a legitimist. Canning’ policy was based on Britain standing aside in ideological conflicts, and standing on middle ground. One can see a little of this even in his Cabinet, forced by circumstance to be formed from the most moderate ranks of both parties.

²¹Canning, letter to Bagot Jan 1824, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 221-222.

CHAPTER TWO – REVOLUTION ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

Spain

Upon entering office in 1822, Canning was immediately faced with the problem of Revolution in Spain. The Congress of Verona was assembling, and Canning did not even have time to draw up new instructions for the Duke of Wellington, attending on behalf of Great Britain. This hardly mattered because Canning would not have differed from Castlereagh's directive not to get involved in any escapades in Spain, or make any real commitment to the Allies. Canning's policy on Spain, and later Portugal, was essentially to allow each nation to work out its own internal constitution, while being extremely wary of any outside interference. If Spanish revolutionaries had created a radically republican government that their King did not approve of, it should be left to them to figure out the details. Canning consistently supported the notion of 'self-determination', although his allies in the Quintuple Alliance did not agree with him. Throughout his tenure in office, he had to devote time and energy trying to contain the conflicts that raged across the Iberian Peninsula.

Spain had been in turmoil ever since Napoleon unceremoniously deposed King Ferdinand VII during the Napoleonic War. After the war, the Bourbon King was restored to power. Yet many liberals still remembered the 1812 Constitution which had tried to

establish a constitutional monarchy with very strong republican overtones. After the peace, Spain's main priority was to reclaim its overseas colonies. Spanish soldiers were shipped off to the New World to fight a losing war against revolutionaries proclaiming new republics. By 1820 this situation had become untenable, and the spark that set off a new Revolution in Spain was mutinous soldiers in Cadiz refusing to sail for the Americas. Republicans seized control of government and forced the 1812 Constitution on an unwilling monarch. The Spanish revolutionaries adopted the form and even the language of their French counterparts. In their documents, one finds many references to the nation, reason, and liberty. For example one reads

It was natural for a change of this nature to produce some Malcontents. This is the inevitable consequence of every Reform which has for object the correction of abuses. There will always be persons in a Nation who will not submit themselves to the empire of reason and justice²².

One can see the strength of purpose and faith in reason in this passage, alongside veiled threats of Malcontents and justice. Also this was not the work of some Spanish Murat, but from the higher echelons of government. The Spanish Revolution was consciously emulating the French one in language and tone.

The Great Powers were alarmed by this turn of events. For Metternich and his increasingly devoted disciple Alexander I, here were the Jacobins they had fought so hard against, providing a chance to utilize the Quintuple Alliance. Here were those republicans resurrected and ready to set fire to Europe once again. The only problem being they were located in far-off Spain, where neither Austria nor Russia could easily

²²Instructions from Evaristo San Miguel to Duke of San Lorenzo, Spanish Minister at Paris Jan 9, 1823 (trans) in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823* (London: James Ridgeway and Sons, 1850), p 931-932.

reach. These sentiments were of course an oversimplification of how foreign courts pictured the Spanish Revolution. There were more practical concerns, such as how France would respond or the potential for the Revolution to spread, as one would so dramatically in 1848. Yet this view of reactionary courts was the image liberals across Europe, and particularly in Spain, gleaned from the situation. These type of perspectives help explain why Canning was seen as a hero for standing up to the pretensions of the Holy Alliance.

There were very practical reasons the Quintuple Alliance could not act in Spain. Great Britain refused to co-operate with its Allies, so that left only France with any real scope of action. Alexander had offered to help restore the king, but no one else could allow Russian troops to march across Europe. A restored Bourbon France saw in Spain an opportunity to expand its influence, restore its monarchist credentials, and shore up support for its own government. Even before the Congress of Verona, France had begun to build up an Army of Observation in the Pyrenees. Going into Verona it was clear who was capable and willing to act in Spain.

The Congress of Verona 1822 was the last great Congress in tradition of the Congress of Vienna. There were later Congresses, but over much more limited matters and called infrequently. After Verona, the idea of regular Congresses establishing a very loose supra-national government died. The hostility of the British to multilateral action and rifts between Russia and Austria, especially after Alexander's death, discouraged the assembly of anymore Congresses for a long time²³. Some part of this hesitation to use

²³See either Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848*

Congresses was due to the experience of the Congress of Verona. The Duke of Wellington was the only voice of opposition at the Congress, simply rejecting any sort of interference in Spain. He wrote with some understatement to Canning that “A marked difference of opinions as to the mode of action has appeared between the Continental Courts on the one hand, and England on the other²⁴.” The other Great Powers could not agree on any particular plan of action. The tsar’s plan of marching Russian troops across Germany and France into Spain was unacceptable to the other Powers, and impossible without their approval. The British ambassador in Berlin described how the Russians, unable to actual act themselves, were pushing the French towards war with Spain²⁵. The end result of the Congress was simply the Powers deploring the Spanish Revolution, and leaving the door open for France to intervene.

The British were disappointed by the result of the Congress of Verona, but not surprised. They recalled memories of the Peninsular campaign against Napoleon, when the British aided the Spanish in driving the French out. The Duke of Wellington had achieved fame in Spain; even the Ultras were outraged by the re-entrance of French troops into Spain. British public opinion supported their government in opposing France, and radical leaders went so far as to advocate armed resistance to a French invasion. Most importantly for Canning and those who formulated foreign policy were the explosive possibilities inherent in any French campaign. Henry Wellesley, the British

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) or Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992).

²⁴Duke of Wellington, letter to Canning, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 8-9.

²⁵Rose, letter to Canning Nov 1822, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 139-140.

representative in Spain wrote to Canning “If the French send any troops into Spain be assured that there will be just such another war there as the last, and that sooner or later all Europe will be dragged into it²⁶.” He was hardly alone in his apprehension of war. Canning himself wrote many times of his fear, dreading “the war much more for France than Spain²⁷.” The fear was a French defeat could destabilize the French monarchy to the point that revolutionaries could take over in Paris. Most commentators had little faith that a French intervention could be easy or bloodless. The French Army had shed most of its Napoleonic veterans. Many thought the French would once again be bogged down in a guerilla campaign as they had under Napoleon. There was also the memory of the French Revolution, when foreign invasion radicalized the Revolution. Canning wrote to the Spanish that

The spirit of revolution, which, shut up within the Pyrenees, might exhaust itself in struggles, trying indeed to Spain, but harmless to her neighbors, if called forth from within those precincts by the provocation of foreign attack, might find perhaps in other Countries fresh aliment for its fury and might renew, throughout Europe, the miseries of the five and twenty years which preceded the peace of 1815²⁸.

Canning and those around him were extremely wary of the possibilities which could potentially arise from a French invasion. The only party truly wishing for a war in Spain, even an extended one if possible, was the United States. Stratford Canning, cousin of the foreign minister describes how “The prospect of a good lasting extensive conflict in

²⁶Wellesley, letter to Canning, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 146.

²⁷*Ibid*, 156.

²⁸Canning, letter to Vicomte de Marcellus Jan 10, 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, p 21.

Europe is, of course, very flattering to Jonathon's [Quincy Adams] commercial views²⁹."

An extended war in Spain would have ended attempts to reclaim Spanish colonies.

While the British desired the wars in Latin America to end, there was much more at stake on the Continent. Hoping to avoid conflict, Canning implored both sides in a vain to stop an increasingly probable French invasion.

The British government made overtures to the Spanish to moderate their government and guarantee the safety of the Spanish royal family. The Duke of Wellington, famous in Spain for his exploits during the war, was the ideal vehicle for this type of overture without offending the sensibilities of the Spanish. Wellington sent his representative Somerset to Madrid, making it very clear that this was not an official act of the British government. He advised the Spanish to restore more power to the monarchy in order to prevent a French invasion and stave off the threats of the Revolution: "the very foundations of social order and government are in a state of risk³⁰." The British had to be circumspect about their advice, in order to follow their own principle of non-interference, and hopefully so the Spanish would follow their advice. In the end, despite many debates on the issue, the Revolutionaries did not alter the Constitution of 1812.

The only course left to the British was to make it crystal clear to the Spanish where the British stood, and discourage any hopes the Spanish might entertain of British aid. Shortly before the war began, Canning wrote to the ambassador in Madrid to tell the Spanish that "We wish for Peace therefore in Europe: but Peace for ourselves we

²⁹Stratford Canning, letter to Canning, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 163.

³⁰Wellington, Memorandum to the Spanish Jan 6, 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 31-32.

determined of all events to preserve³¹.” He made it clear that Britain will observe a strict neutrality in the upcoming conflict, and the Spanish would be left alone to deal with the French invaders.

The Spanish were at least somewhat receptive to British appeals, and tried to re-organize their government in vain. The French on the other hand were calmly dismissive of the British. The British made an offer to the French for mediate, which they declined politely. Canning grew frustrated by the whole ordeal, because it was entirely unclear what the French desired in Spain³². Perhaps partly out of frustration, but more likely to appeal to the British public, Canning made a speech on April 30, 1823 in front of Parliament intimating that he hoped for a Spanish victory in order to avoid the most feared consequences of the conflict³³. This speech drew the anger of the other Great Powers: Bagot in St. Petersburg tells of the Russian disdain for “dragging the Allies before Parliament³⁴.” This speech did not help Canning’s position abroad, but no one supported the British on the matter of Spain anymore.

Meanwhile Canning urged the British ambassador to Paris to stress the importance of peace in consolidating the fragile French political system³⁵. The British

³¹Canning, letter to A’Court Jan 23 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 37.

³²*George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, p 182-183.

³³For full speech see George Canning, *Select Speeches of the Right Honorable George Canning* (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1835)

³⁴Bagot, letter to Canning, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 175-176.

³⁵Canning, letter to Stuart Jan 24, 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 46.

ambassador Stuart failed to change the French King's mind, and the build-up towards war continued unabated. The war was not solely a French affair; they had the support of Austria, Russia, and Prussia in their endeavor. While only French troops were involved, they were given moral support from the Holy Alliance. All of the Allies, except Britain of course, had decided to withdraw their ambassadors to Madrid in protest at the same time for virtually the same reasons³⁶. The Eastern powers were obviously supporting the French invasion. They colluded together in this matter to show their support of the French efforts to restore the legitimate authority of the Spanish monarch.

As a prelude to the war in Spain, the French King gave a speech before the Chamber of Deputies giving his reasons for going to war. In the speech the King espoused the principles of Legitimacy, arguing that only the Spanish King could consent to divesting any of his authority, and any system imposed on him was unlawful. This speech enraged the British, not enough to get involved in the war, but a bitter pill to swallow along with the French invasion. Stuart in Paris wrote to Canning that the speech struck "at the root of the British Constitution"³⁷. Canning shared his outrage at the French King's speech, and wrote back to him a warning that he was embarking on a "contest of extreme principles which has already desolated Europe ... if reopened now, neither we nor our sons' sons may see the conclusion"³⁸. He saw that the French King was all too willing to make this war one of ideologies, and feared that doing so would make it a Pan-European conflict. He informed the French where British sympathies lied:

³⁶Gordon, letter to Canning Dec 22, 1822, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 142.

³⁷Stuart, letter to Canning Jan 30, 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 53.

³⁸Canning, letter to Charles X, Feb 23, 1823, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 72.

“If I were called to choose between the principles laid down in the speech of H.M. the king of France, and its antagonistic principle, the sovereignty of the people, I should feel myself compelled to acknowledge that the former is the more alien of the two to the British Constitution³⁹.” Canning gave the French King a rather blunt reminder where the British stand on the subject.

The French King sent his response through the British ambassador that the British system was entirely based on religious motives from the past and as such “entirely inapplicable to other countries⁴⁰.” While the Spanish constitution may have been radical, Louis XVIII had recognized limits on his own authority upon returning to power. Charles X was pushing his own absolutist principles onto French foreign policy. Even though the Holy Alliance may have approved, these ideas are partially what led to Charles X’s overthrow in 1830. This interchange between king and minister helps one to understand what the major issues at stake were in Spain, France sought to define it in terms of ideological struggle between legitimacy and republicanism. Canning meanwhile, tried to sap the ideology out of the argument and insisted the issue revolves around an unprovoked invasion:

Our difference with France and the Allies throughout, is not as to the Arrangements which it might be desirable to obtain from Spain, but as to the principle upon which France and the Allies propose to require them. We disclaim for Ourselves, and deny for other Powers, the right of requiring any Changes in the internal Institutions of Independent States, with the menace of hostile attack in the case of refusal⁴¹.

³⁹Ibid, 74.

⁴⁰Stuart, letter to Canning, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 77.

⁴¹Canning, letter to Stuart Jan 28, 1823, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 26.

Here Canning laid out clearly where he differed from his Allies. He valued the independence of nations over and above any sort of ideological dispute. This was the crux of Canning's foreign policy, not just in Spain, but for all of Europe and will be seen in Latin America as well.

France soon crossed the frontier and entered into Spain. The British government, having failed to prevent the conflict, was now faced with the question of what exactly should be done. For Canning it was obvious which side they favored in the conflict: he wrote that even though "The king [of Spain] is as bad a King and the Cortes as bad a Government as one can conceive. But between invaded and invader the choice is clear⁴²." For the British, then, it was more of a question of how far they should take their support of Spain. They refused to withdraw their ambassador to Madrid as the other Great Powers had done in concert. A memorandum for the Cabinet, most likely drafted by Canning, dealt with the possibility of declaring war on France. It described how the British were still in debt from the previous war, how the army was not prepared, and how British entry into the war would have made intervention more popular in France. Beyond these reasons, the British feared the other Powers might side with France leaving Hanover vulnerable to Prussia. Also a French controlled Spain could threaten Portugal, a British ally. The memorandum concluded that it was not in the interests of Great Britain to declare war over Spain⁴³. Canning therefore was willing to allow the French to enter Spain, yet there were British interests at stake of which the French had to be reminded.

⁴²*George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 181-182.

⁴³Memorandum of Feb 23 1823, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning* ed. Stapleton, 85-86.

One issue was the secret article of the 1814 treaty between Spain and France, of which Britain was a signatory. This article strictly forbade the French from trying to enter into any sort of family pact or alliance with Spain that “may affect the independence of Spain, [or] which may be injurious to the interests of His Britannic Majesty⁴⁴.” The British could not allow the French to simply take over Spain or revive the fears of over a century earlier during the time of the War of Spanish Succession. The other concern for Britain was its longstanding ally Portugal, which would now be vulnerable to French forces. Finally, as will be seen below, Britain was concerned over the fate of the New World, and did not want the French to interfere there. In the end the only action Canning and the British government decided to take was a warning to France that they will be neutral in the conflict if France followed three restrictions. The French must not seek territorial gain or seek to dominate Spain, they must not violate Portugal, and they must not aid the Spanish in the New World.

The French followed the British guidelines, and despite all the dire predictions, they successfully marched on Madrid. The Revolutionary Government fled south to Cadiz, but soon were surrounded and defeated by the French armies who reinstated Ferdinand VII to the throne. By the end there was surprisingly little bloodshed; the Spanish did not turn out to fight the French when they only proclaimed to free their king. In short time the Spanish king was restored to power.

Yet to the consternation of the Charles X, King Ferdinand VII turned out to be an even more arch-conservative than the French King. After being returned to power, the

⁴⁴Secret Article to 1814 Treaty, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 76.

Spanish King was confident that “the melancholy effects of the late disasters will soon be forever obliterated⁴⁵.” In the aftermath of the Revolution, the king embraced a reactionary policy. He continued “I am resolved to preserve inviolate, and in all their plenitude, the legitimate rights of my sovereignty, without resigning, either now or at any other time, the smallest portion of them⁴⁶.” The French government had hoped that the Spanish King would have enacted something like their Charter giving more political rights and representation to his subjects. Instead Ferdinand hanged the ringleaders of the Revolution, and imprisoned hundreds of others. As will be seen below, he also called for a new Congress to help Spain restore its authority in the New World. The French kept their forces in Spain, but it had turned into a drawn out presence that they themselves wanted to be released. The British over the rest of Canning’s tenure made repeated demands that the French withdraw, and Canning was even raked over the coals in Parliament for not pressing the French hard enough. Yet general war had been avoided, and eventually Anglo-French relations improved.

So what was the final result of the Spanish Revolution and French invasion? Canning and the British had been isolated from the rest of the Allies, and the French had invaded despite British objections. The whole thing was a black-eye for the British. They had shed blood to drive the French out of Spain only to see them return ten years later, albeit in a very different manner. Canning had succeeded only in making the French agree to terms they would probably have followed regardless. The French

⁴⁵Decree of Spanish King Apr 19 1825 (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825*, 897.

⁴⁶*Ibid*, 898.

themselves had gone from the pariah of Europe to a trusted member of the Alliance, while now Britain was the outsider. Yet by speaking out against French aggression so publicly, Canning had clearly established the shape of British foreign policy to Europe. He had become the darling of liberals, yet this in of itself was hardly what he had hoped to achieve. Perhaps the most he had in fact accomplished was consistency in his policy. He spoke out publicly about the views of Great Britain during the crisis and showed a remarkable level of transparency for the period, as opposed to Castlereagh who had objected in private while publicly supporting the Allies. As small consolation, the French invasion had not turned out to be what was expected. The French had to deal with an unpredictable Spanish King and keep soldiers there for many years. The British avoided the general war that was feared, and perhaps the best result coming out of the crisis was that it was diffused before it could escalate.

Portugal

Portugal was an altogether different case than Spain, and the crisis there, while not as potentially harmful to Europe as a whole, was more acutely a threat to British interests. Portugal had had a very different experience during the Napoleonic Wars. Portugal, like Spain, was occupied by Napoleonic forces, but the King escaped to Brazil under British escort, where he continued to rule. After the war, King John VI lingered in Brazil until 1821, and made a fateful decision on the future of his kingdom. He decided to return to Portugal to rule as king, but left his son Pedro to rule in Brazil which had grown used to being ruled from Rio de Janeiro. Upon his return to Portugal the king

granted a liberal constitution that upset many conservatives, chiefly his own son Miguel. Miguel staged two attempted rebellions against his father, in 1821 and 1823, which led to his exile in 1824. Miguel fled to Vienna where he fostered a relationship with Metternich.

Meanwhile King John VI's more liberal son Pedro had declared independence in Brazil and had established himself as Emperor of Brazil. He too gave his nation a constitution. In Portugal the king did nothing to restore his authority in Brazil, in the expectation that upon his death they would be reunited in the person of his son. Upon his death in 1826 Brazil and Portugal were briefly united under the rule of Pedro IV, yet he had grown attached to Brazil. Pedro decided to grant Portugal an even more liberal constitution and then abdicate the throne in favor of his daughter Maria, who was only seven years old at the time. As regent, he appointed his conservative brother Miguel on the condition that he swear an oath to respect the constitution and marry his niece Maria. Although hesitating at first Miguel took the oath and returned to Lisbon.

Great Britain had a long-standing Alliance with Portugal, one they still greatly valued. Like Spain, Great Britain had fought in Portugal against Napoleon as well and renewed its alliance once again. From the beginning Britain took an acute interest in the political confusion in Portugal, and the example of Spain had made them wary of possible interference from other Powers. Yet there were key differences from Spain: Portugal was under the protection of Great Britain, for one. Also the Portuguese constitution was not as republican as the Spanish had been, and had been granted by the legitimate ruler of Portugal, even if it was his only major act as king. It was unclear as to exactly how far the

Great Powers would push their reactionary agenda in the case of Portugal, and throughout the crisis Canning was leery of foreign meddling.

Even before the crisis truly came to a head, an interesting episode occurred concerning the French ambassador to Lisbon, one Neville. In order to deal with some rebels in northern Portugal, Neville had requested French troops to cross over into Portugal. Fortunately the French commander had enough sense to ask Paris for permission, which was denied and nothing came of this requested invasion. The French government recalled Neville, yet for some unknown reason the Russian ambassador in Paris convinced the government to change its mind and return Neville to Lisbon⁴⁷. This strange episode alerted the British of suspect designs by the Russians and French in Portugal, while not actually providing any sort of real transgression they could officially protest.

The real worry was not so much over small plots or some underhanded diplomacy. Instead the British worried that Portugal would become like Spain had been a few years earlier, a battleground for the ideologies stemming from the French Revolution. Conservatives felt the new constitution was too liberal, and for them “Liberalism was a contagious moral disease which could not safely be tolerated on one’s frontiers⁴⁸.” The clash threatened to turn into civil war, especially dangerous considering Miguel’s former revolts and his close ties to Metternich. Previously in 1823, the Portuguese had calling

⁴⁷a full account of this episode is given in Canning, letter to Liverpool Nov, 1824, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Stapleton, 195.

⁴⁸Hinde, *George Canning*, 413-414.

for British help to put down Miguel's rebellion⁴⁹. Canning was tempted to call in Hanoverian troops, which did not have to have the approval of Parliament. But Canning thought it unnecessary and only sent a squadron of ships to the harbor of Lisbon. This deployment proved to be quite fortuitous, for the Portuguese king himself was forced at one point in 1823 to take refuge on these British warships to escape from his son.

Events in Portugal so far had been tumultuous, yet had not yet reached a point where the Portuguese state truly needed British soldiers. Thus the British, while providing some small aid, were content to allow events to take their own course. This would change in 1826 when armed rebels increasingly began to win border skirmishes against the crown and the threat of an armed takeover of Lisbon loomed. The true threat laid in the fact that these men were for the most part deserters and followers of Miguel who had fled over the Spanish border. A treaty between Spain and Portugal stipulated that in just such a case, the men should be disarmed and either returned or sent away from the frontier. Yet the Spanish were not only refraining from taking their arms, but supplying them with more weapons and then sending them back into Portugal. It was not entirely clear who was responsible for this violation of the treaties. Local army commanders were the ones committing the acts, but it was not conclusively proven whether they were following orders from the Spanish government or even possibly the French. It was not even clear whether these soldiers were entirely Portuguese or made up of some Spanish recruited to the conservative cause. Dom Miguel was suspected of having ties to the leaders, but again there was not substantial proof of this connection.

⁴⁹*George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, p 247-249.

Even though he was now in a position of authority in Lisbon, and could expect to be prince-consort to the Queen, he was not at all satisfied with the constitution he had sworn to uphold.

As the situation escalated, the Portuguese called upon the British to help them. Considering the increasing danger to the Portuguese state, along with foreign interference in the rebellion this time, Canning decided to send British troops to Lisbon. In one of his finest speeches before Parliament, Canning justifies this deployment as aid to an ancient ally threatened by foreign assault⁵⁰. This decision by Canning was extremely popular in England, especially among liberals who saw again an example of Canning defending the concept of a constitution against absolutist enemies. As a foreign policy decision, it was rather straightforward. Even though the connection to foreigners was not direct, Canning framed it as the defense of Portugal, to which Britain was obligated by treaties. Canning was protecting the internal institutions of Portugal, which he considered their right to determine. The only major question remaining was what would be the response of Spain and France to British intervention in Portugal.

The Spanish were the ones directly violating a treaty with Portugal over deserters crossing the border. There was some concern in the Cabinet and among the diplomatic corps that aiding Portugal could lead to war with Spain. While not an entirely likely outcome, Canning was considering the possibility. He writes to Liverpool that in such an eventuality, a peninsular war against Spain would be foolhardy. Instead he proposes that they focus on protecting Portugal while attacking Cuba, the base for Spanish operations

⁵⁰The full speech is contained in *The Speeches of George Canning*.

for retaking its American empire⁵¹. France still had troops in Spain at this time, and there was an even more remote possibility of the French getting involved.

The chief fear was that the French may argue that Portugal, like Spain in 1823, was not legitimate and attempt to invest Dom Miguel on the throne without the protections of the constitution. Yet this scenario was extremely unlikely, for as Hinde suggests, the French were “more interested in their private duel with England over Portugal than in European ideological solidarity⁵².” The French were interested in gaining influence in Portugal and hopefully weaken the British position there, but their policy was guided by pragmatism and they were not willing to face a direct confrontation with British over Portugal. Britain had had a close relationship with Portugal since the seventeenth century, and it was seen as in the British orbit, much as Italy was in Austrian zone of influence and many of German lands under either Prussian or Austrian oversight.

Several thousand British soldiers entered Lisbon in 1826 to help shore up the Portuguese government. These troops did not see any action and were more of a symbol of British support than anything else. The British presence did allow Portuguese units to leave the capitol for the frontier and the rebels were put down soon after. In the end the entire affair was of only secondary importance for British. The peace of Europe was not threatened by the crisis, and any sort of ideological overtones to the struggle were contained, if not solely in Portugal at least on the Iberian Peninsula. Yet these events represented a symbolic victory for Britain. It had proven Great Britain’s resolve to aid a

⁵¹*Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Stapleton, 144.

⁵²Hinde, *George Canning*, 378-379.

close ally and friend. Once again Canning had supported a constitutional monarchy against more conservative elements, yet as has been seen, he framed it solely in terms of the alliance. Even if claims of foreign interference were dubious, not even the Ultras in Great Britain opposed his actions.

British aid could not ensure that the Portuguese government would be well-run however. Canning tried to give his advice to the Portuguese after this episode on how to effectively govern under a constitutional monarchy, arguing in favor of the minister Real and advising that they include those who differ in opinion from the government on only small points⁵³. In the end, this victory would prove to be rather short-lived, for in 1828 Wellington withdrew the British soldiers. Miguel promptly seized control of the throne and discarded the constitution. Wellington did not help at the time, but in 1834 Pedro defeated Miguel with the aid of the British under Palmerston to re-establish Maria. By 1834 the threat of outside interference had greatly diminished due to the Revolution of 1830 in France and Carlist wars in Spain. Canning guaranteed that at a critical time, only Britain had the right to intervene in Portugal, one which he used sparingly.

Both of these crises on the Iberian Peninsula display how Canning's foreign policy worked in action. His position was to allow the internal politics of a nation go unhindered unless they become a threat to their neighbors. In the case of Spain this meant trying to prevent a French invasion backed by the rest of the Quintuple Alliance, although the stakes were simply too high for the British to support the Spanish militarily. In Portugal, an ally to Britain, this meant allowing inept government and only getting

⁵³Canning, letter to A'Court, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, ed. Stapleton, 271-272.

involved when foreigners threatened the state. From Canning's perspective, the threat laid not so much with Jacobins or republicans in Iberia, but with Britain's partners in the Quintuple Alliance who sought to impose their ideology on their weaker neighbors. Canning was especially wary of the French, who had intervened in Spain and were a traditional enemy of Britain. These crises also highlight the ultimately pragmatic nature of Canning's policy. Taken to the extreme, his foreign policy should have dictated that he defend Spain against France who was the aggressor. Yet he knew that this would have accomplished little while threatening to reopen a general war. In Portugal as well, if he had rigidly followed his policy there would have been no need to send troops to Portugal, since the rebels were mostly Portuguese themselves and only armed by a foreign power. Canning was flexible on these points and willing to alter his policy slightly in order to better deal with real world situations and further the interests of Great Britain.

CHAPTER FOUR – LATIN AMERICA AND RECOGNITION

Colonial expansion was perhaps the most important hallmark of Great Britain throughout most of the modern era. From the era of Drake and Raleigh until the collapse of the British Empire after World War II, Great Britain cultivated and amassed an overseas empire of unprecedented proportions. During the 1820's, the nature of the British Empire was changing, from one focused on the Western Hemisphere to one focused on long settled areas in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Yet the Americas remained the focus of Canning, as the dissolution of the Spanish Empire was of pressing importance for another feature of the British Empire, trade and markets for increasing industrial production. The Napoleonic Wars had disrupted Spanish America and laid the groundwork for independence, yet the Congress of Vienna virtually ignored what had happened across the Atlantic.

The old European colonial powers still had a stake in the New World, Great Britain through Canada and Caribbean islands as well as the new trade with Spanish America. France, though greatly diminished as a colonial power, still held some small islands and was thought to desire more. Spain still claimed the entirety of its empire stretching from California to Argentina, even though much of this was in open revolt. Portugal, although officially separated from Brazil, was still tied to it through the royal family, as seen above. Also a new power, the United States of America, had greatly increased its size through the Louisiana Purchase, and seemed bent on further increasing its size and influence. Although these factors made the Americas volatile, absorbing much of Canning's time and attention, they culminated in his greatest foreign policy

achievements.

Although by this time, much of the New World had been parceled out and settled, there were still large tracts of territory in North America still unclaimed. The Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and much of the interior were still only inhabited by small tribes of native Americans. The Russian Empire had established small trading posts on the coast of Alaska, and based large territorial claims on these. The United States had commissioned Lewis and Clark to explore to the Pacific and was very interested in expanding in this direction. The United Kingdom also was interested in expanding its Canadian possessions to the Pacific. These issues, although Canning was very interested in them, would be left unresolved for the time being, but represented a potential conflict between colonizing powers.

The future of colonization itself was an issue, or rather who should be allowed to colonize the remaining areas or take possession of established colonies. Britain was keen not only to hold onto its current colonies, but also to expand its influence. The United States wanted to see the older European powers kept of the Americas, although it recognized that it had no way of doing so. This confluence of interests led to close negotiations between Britain and the United States, even though they had been at war 1812-1814, and resulted in the famous Monroe Doctrine. This doctrine, although proclaimed by the United States, was in fact in the interests of Britain, and only enforceable by the British navy. Although the Monroe Doctrine changed nothing in of itself, it represented a shared foreign policy over the future of the Americas which would have great importance for the future of the Western Hemisphere.

The most important issue for Britain concerning the New World was over the future of the Spanish Empire. When Napoleon had captured the Spanish King and invaded Spain, these colonies began to enjoy more self-governance. Also with the blockade of Europe, British merchants had infiltrated these colonies commercially, gaining access to raw materials and finding a market for finished goods. After the war ended, many of the colonies desired independence from Spain, beginning a long conflict stretching across all of Spanish America. The issue was further complicated when it became clear that many of these fledgling states were establishing republics. Even across the Atlantic, Britain could not escape revolutionary ideologies and democratic principles. Yet it was Britain that was in a position to intervene while the other major Powers could only look on.

Britain remained neutral in this conflict, but by the 1820's it became clear that Spain could not hold onto all of the colonies and Canning was faced with the difficult question of recognizing these new republics. The future of Spanish America was of major importance for Canning and represented a major bone of contention in his own government between him and the High Tories. Much of Canning's reputation as a liberal was due to his support of American republics, as his friend Strangford writes: "His South American and his Roman Catholic policy is more arch-liberal than anything poor Southey ever said or sang⁵⁴." With the Spanish Empire falling apart, and the French colonial empire at low ebb, the British alone were the only power capable of influencing these new republics either through support or coercion. In the end the British stood on the

⁵⁴Strangford, letter to Bagot Aug, 1825, in *George Canning and Friends*, 292.

sidelines for the most part and gave recognition only when they were confident the Spanish would never be able to return.

Canning's policy towards the New World highlights several key features of his policy in general. Throughout his ministry he maintained a consistent policy which he plainly stated to the other powers involved. For instance, he repeatedly warned Spain that Britain would be forced to recognize the colonies before recognition actually occurred. A second feature was that Canning resisted basing his policy on ideological grounds. The new republics were not supported in their conflict nor recognized until a certain level of stability existed. At the same time Canning had no objection to Spain retaining parts of its empire, including Cuba and Peru. What really drove his policy was the national interests of Britain, as seen by his interests in colonial expansion into strategic areas and continued trade with the region. Finally Canning showed a willingness to co-operate with foreign powers, either the United States or even France over recognition of the new republics in Latin America. All of these features helped Canning's policies in the New World achieve great results. British commercial dominance of the New World was ensured for much of the nineteenth century, and the greatest fears for the area were avoided. Even with the complexities of the Spanish Revolution and French intervention, Canning managed to keep France out of the New World and maintain itself, through the British navy, as the greatest power in the region.

North America

As late as the eighteenth century, Great Britain had been embroiled in colonial wars against France and Spain over territory in the New World. Great Power politics had often spilled over into the Americas, and Britain especially took such issues very seriously. By the 1820's, much of the Western Hemisphere had already been claimed and colonized by European powers, and was entering a new phase of independence as will be seen below. Yet there still remained large unsettled lands mostly in North America that were been contended over. The Pacific Northwest was at the heart of these lands claimed by Russia, Britain, and the newly formed United States. While Russian influence was slight so far away from Europe, Canning was forced to deal with the upcoming United States over many issues concerning the Americas. Even though these issues never came to a crisis or threatened war, Canning's policies would have some important ramifications for the future of the Americas.

Most of northwestern North America was still sparsely settled by native American tribes, while three powers, Russia, United States, and Britain, all hoped to gain parts of this territory. The Russians had explored eastward from Siberia along the coast of Alaska, and in 1821 made a claim to an expansive part of this land. The Russians, in an *ukase*, claimed the entire northwest coast down to the 45° 50' latitude, which would be just below the boundary between where Oregon and Washington meet today. The Russians also forbade "all foreign vessels not only to not only land ... but also to approach them

within less than 100 Italian miles⁵⁵.” The Russian not only claimed a large territory, but restricted its navigation to its own ships including a large area surrounding the coast. Both the United States and Great Britain protested this claim, especially considering it was based solely on Russian exploration and a small string of trading posts along the Alaskan coast. John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State, replied that “To exclude the Vessels of our citizens, from the shore beyond the ordinary distance to which the Territorial Jurisdiction extends, has excited still greater surprise⁵⁶.” The Anglo-Americans saw no basis for such a large claim. In the end the Russians did not have the resources to enforce such a claim, and the British and Americans both in effect ignored it.

The British and Americans of course both had pretensions to the same territory. The United States had sent Lewis and Clark out to explore the territory to the Pacific Ocean although Americans were still busy settling the area of the Louisiana Purchase and would not really begin to settle this area until California was acquired. Canning was also very interested in gaining this region, especially along the Columbia River, for Britain. He foresaw this region as being vital for the future trade across the Pacific to China⁵⁷. These conflicting claims were not resolved until later, but this small issue does display some of the hypocrisy of Britain’s and Canning’s policy. While they attempted to prevent other European powers from expanding and upsetting the balance of power, this same limitation did not apply to British colonial expansion.

⁵⁵Rules established for the limits of Navigation and Order of Communication Sept 16, 1821 (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1821-1822*, 473.

⁵⁶Adams, Reply to Russian Ukase Feb 25, 1822, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1821-1822*, 483.

⁵⁷Some Official Correspondence of George Canning, 71-74.

Britain was very keen to prevent other European powers from expanding their influence in the New World. As will be seen below, they took French intrigues in Latin America very seriously. Spain, as a declining power that had been established in the New World, was not seen as much of a threat, more so when it was clear they could not hold onto the colonies they currently possessed. This policy closely mirrored the policy of the United States, which also did not want to see European nations getting involved in the Americas. Adams wrote to American ambassador Rush in London about official policy: “the American continents, henceforth, will no longer be subject to *Colonization*. Occupied by civilized, Independent Nations, they will be accessible to Europeans, and each other, on that footing alone⁵⁸.” The similar policies of the United States and Britain led to co-operation despite having fought the War of 1812 not so long ago. Britain was certainly wary of the United States and its potential for expansion, but willing to work with them to achieve their own policy in the Americas.

Canning hoped to work with the United States, especially given the unsettled state of the rest of the New World. He was helped by the congenial U.S. ambassador Benjamin Rush. They tried to work out an arrangement that bound the two nations to a common policy towards the Americas, but Rush lacked the authorization to sign any agreement. While hoping to come to an agreement, Canning was surprised to learn that in late 1823 U.S. President Monroe had spelled out the Monroe Doctrine before Congress. This doctrine declared that the Western Hemisphere was closed to further European colonization and interference. Canning objected to the United States unilateral

⁵⁸Adams, letter to Rush Jul 22, 1823 in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825* (London: James Ridgeway and sons, 1846), 503.

declaration when he was trying to negotiate a joint one, and also to those parts “which aimed at interdicting her [Britain’s] from the right of future colonization in America⁵⁹.” Yet the Monroe Doctrine resembled British policy closely enough, and was effective because the British supported it before the United States navy could effectively. This policy became a cornerstone of American foreign policy, while Canning and future ministers of Britain used it to prevent European intervention from other powers.

In North America, there was no crisis management necessary for Canning. A policy of colonial expansion was hardly novel for Britain, but he did see the importance of the Pacific coast for trade across the Pacific. For the most important achievement of Canning in North America, he had been cut out by the United States. Even though only the British navy could possibly enforce such a policy, it became the hallmark of the United States. Yet some credit must go to his ministry for working with the United States to co-ordinate policy and make it clear to the rest of the world the new changing nature of the Americas. This new nature can best be seen by the emergence of new republican states across Latin America supplanting the Spanish Empire.

⁵⁹Rush, letter to Adams Aug 22, 1824, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825*, 516.

Latin America

The long process of gaining independence in Latin America began when Napoleon captured the Spanish king and the colonies enacted the so-called Mask of Ferdinand where they claimed obedience to the Spanish king, but really began to devolve power to themselves. The long-term causes, such as tension between local elites and Spaniards and economic dissatisfaction, are too complex to go into here, but the most important result was that by the 1820s the colonies were in open revolt against the Spanish crown. Some areas were more successful and drove the Spanish out completely. Others like Peru and Mexico faced a long drawn-out conflict against Spanish soldiers. The entire issue was further complicated by the Revolution in Spain and subsequent French occupation. By the end of Canning's ministry it had become clear that most if not all of the Spanish Empire would become independent republics.

Great Britain played a pivotal role in the long series of events leading towards independence. During the Napoleonic Wars when Europe was under embargo, Britain had taken over the lion's share of trade with Latin America. Britain gained access to raw materials needed for the war, while finding markets for export denied in Europe. In Europe, Britain aided the Spanish guerillas while landing its own armies to fight off Napoleon. By the end of the war, a grateful Spain agreed to allow British trade in its colonies. By the 1820s the situation had grown worse in Latin America as full-scale war broke out. The Spanish grew wary of British trade; and worried about arms imports for the rebels. The British began to worry about how the unsettled political situation would adversely affect their trade. Castlereagh had warned Spain that recognition was a

possibility if the situation persisted, and Canning took it further by repeatedly pressing Spain and eventually recognizing the new republics over the objections of the Quintuple Alliance. In the end, Britain managed to retain its economic influence over Latin America, only to be supplanted by a growing United States in the late nineteenth century.

From the beginning of Canning's ministry, British trade in the Americas was threatened by Spanish attempts to gain control of its colonial possessions. British merchants had their ships seized and faced stiff penalties for any perceived co-operation with the revolutionaries. One such example of the Spanish crackdown was a decree promulgated by the commanding Spanish general:

Such foreigners as shall hereafter be taken or found in the Military Service, or in any branch of administration of the Enemy; such as shall be convicted of having a share in any Printing Office; or of being Editors or Compilers of any Journal, Pamphlet, or Work, relative to the present War, the Affairs of revolted America, the Roman Catholick Religion, or that shall be in any manner offensive to the Nation, its Government, or subjects, shall suffer death, after undergoing a short Military trial.⁶⁰

These harsh terms along with the very general nature of punishable crimes, infuriated the British. Along with these terms, the Spanish declared a blockade on the entire Spanish Main, obviously harmful to British trade. The British response was unequivocal and backed by the British navy. The British commander of the West Indies promised that "by seizing British Vessels ... I shall immediately reclaim them ... and if that be denied, I shall be under the necessity of directing them to be retaken by force, if necessary, and the Vessel of War, by which they may have been molested, to be brought into Port Royal⁶¹."

⁶⁰Decree of General Morales Sept 15, 1822 (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 938.

⁶¹Protest of the Admiral, and Commander in Chief of the British Naval Forces, in the

The Spanish eventually backed down from the blockade and harsh measures in the face of a defiant Britain, but continued to periodically molest British shipping. After Trafalgar, the Spanish navy could hardly enforce an effective blockade over such a long coast anyway.

Canning and the British government took this matter very seriously. In his first memorandum to the Cabinet, Canning outlined his views for dealing with the problems in Latin America, and adhered remarkably to them throughout his entire ministry. He described the problems facing Britain in respect to the Americas, claiming it was disgraceful for the “first maritime power of the world” to be reduced to convoying ships into friendly ports during peacetime⁶². He recommended that a fleet be sent to the New World to deal with Spanish privateers and blockade ports if necessary. He concludes that the new republics were going to have to be recognized eventually⁶³. From the very beginning of his ministry Canning advocated this solution, especially given the intransigence of the Spanish over trade in the region and their draconian methods used to restore authority in the colonies.

Yet recognition was not an easy sell to the rest of the British Government. The Cabinet was divided with the Ultras opposing recognition. They feared the effects of recognizing revolutionary governments, especially given Britain’s sizable colonial empire. They also remembered the American Revolution, and were reluctant to play the role France had then. While Canning had the support of Prime Minister Liverpool, it was

West Indies, &c Dec 5, 1822, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1822-1823*, 942.

⁶²*Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 54-55.

⁶³*Ibid*, 57.

the truculence of the Spanish and fear of the French which eventually allowed Canning to move towards recognition. While Canning could send representatives to the new states to assess their stability, full recognition had to be delayed. Meanwhile the British government followed a policy of neutrality in the conflict.

Despite threatening recognition, Canning hoped to use his influence to try and end the conflict as soon as possible. He wrote to both the republics and Spain that moderation and negotiation were better paths to follow than war. After repeatedly sending advice to Spain to mediate a solution, Canning told them “this explicit recapitulation of the whole course of our sentiments and of our proceedings on this momentous subject, must at once acquit us of any indisposition ... and protect us against the suspicion of having any purpose to conceal from Spain or from the World⁶⁴.”

Canning tried to distance the British from the mistakes of the Spanish and also make it clear that eventual recognition would not be some unexpected attack on Spain. Yet he was disingenuous in painting Britain as uninterested, since they did in fact have a substantial commercial at stake, jeopardized by continued conflict. At the same time Canning tried to convince the revolutionaries to try and negotiate a settlement as well. For example he wrote to the Mexican mission telling them they should try to settle while they have an advantage, suggesting that if Mexico is reasonable, the “game will be greatly in their favour⁶⁵.” Neither side followed Canning’s advice, and the wars continued in the New World. Spain was being too intractable; and the revolutionaries

⁶⁴Canning, letter to A’Court Jan 30, 1824, in *British Foreign and State Papers 1823-1824*, 62-63.

⁶⁵Canning, letter to Mexican Mission Apr 1824, in *Canning and Friends*, 237.

were fully committed to independence.

The Latin American republics themselves were of course the most ardent advocates of recognition. They wanted to legitimize their newly formed states and ensure future commercial relations with Britain. The Colombian secretary of state for foreign affairs made an appeal to Britain in front of the Colombian Congress, stating that

Our anxiety to accomplish so desirable a measure [recognition] has been, and is, proportionate to the high degree of influence acquired by that Cabinet [British], not only in Europe, but in the whole universe, and more especially since the events of 1814 placed the British Empire in the political rank of Nations. The British, the most extensive in the World, has established everywhere, and in every clime, a commerce so vast, that there can remain but little to wish for. To us the friendship of Great Britain is of the highest importance; and the good will which the People of the opulent Empire have ever professed towards us, is a presage not a little consolatory of what we may hope from its government.⁶⁶

This address, even though a little overly laudatory, tells of the faith Colombia had in the good offices of the British. They knew Britain had the most interest in recognition, and was the most inclined power to do so. Even though the United States had recognized the republics at their inception; its similar government, common history, and relative influence made their recognition not nearly as crucial as Britain's. Britain represented a Great Power, part of the Quintuple Alliance that dominated Europe. Several of the new republics sent envoys all the way to London to plead their case.

The rest of the Alliance was not eager to recognize the republics. Only France had any real interest in the matter, but their American empire had dwindled to a few

⁶⁶Address of secretary of state for foreign affairs to Colombian Congress Apr 17, 1823 (trans), in *British Foreign and State Papers 1822-1823*, 748-749.

small Caribbean islands. Austria, Russia, and Prussia viewed Latin Americans as revolutionaries breaking away from a legitimate monarch. Ideology shaped their opinion since no national interests were at stake. If Canning was going to gain any support for his policies in America, it would be from France.

In 1823, Canning invited the French foreign minister, Polignac, to London for discussions on the New World. After several days of talks, Canning wrote out the major points in what became known as the Polignac Memorandum. He sent it to Polignac for a signature, which he was reluctant to give, and then sent it out as a circular to all the major courts of Europe. Canning had important objectives at stake. He convinced the French to renounce any attempts to control parts of the Spanish Empire, or any special commercial privileges. Britain likewise renounced these acts. Canning once again put into writing his views on recognition; while France only admitted that the relationship between Spain and its colonies could not return to its former state. Polignac refused to advocate recognition, claiming these new republics “had no government, and that recognition would be ‘nothing less than a real sanction of anarchy⁶⁷.’” The major objection was the type of government being established. The French refused to recognize the states for the time being.

Another important feature of the Polignac Memorandum was the British assertion over the Americas. Canning made clear that Britain was not going to accept the decisions of its Continental allies concerning the Western Hemisphere. Canning states that “Great

⁶⁷ “Polignac Memorandum”, in Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning 1822-1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1925), 117.

Britain was not prepared to go into a 'joint deliberation' upon the subject of Spanish America upon an equal footing with other Powers, whose minds were less formed upon that question and whose interests were less implicated in the decision of it⁶⁸." Canning was asserting that Britain was not going to let the Quintuple Alliance control the Americas in the same way they exercised authority in Europe. After the Napoleonic Wars, no other state was in a position to challenge the British hegemony at sea. In a sense, Canning was only stating what the other powers knew to be true. This type of statement was very characteristic of Canning. He asserted the national interests of Britain loudly over any claims the Quintuple Alliance may have had on Britain. While Castlereagh would have been more diplomatic over the entire conference, Canning approach did have results. The French, and the other powers, stayed away from the New World, even after the restored Spanish king pleaded for aid.

Upon regaining power, Ferdinand's regime in Spain made restoring authority in Latin America a top priority. They sought the aid of the Alliance in their objective, appealing to the principle of the Holy Alliance to enlist their aid. Spanish minister Ofalio sent a letter to Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg asking for a new Congress to deal with the situation in the Americas: "they will assist Him [Ferdinand] in accomplishing the worthy object of upholding the principles of order and legitimacy, the subversion of which, once commenced in America, would presently communicate to Europe⁶⁹." He intentionally emphasized the principles of order to appeal to the monarchs of Europe,

68 "Polignac Memorandum", Ibid, 116.

69 Ofalio, Circular to Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1823-1824*, 55-57.

while insinuating that revolution could easily cross the Atlantic and re-infect Europe.

Canning admits that “we may consider the whole Alliance as united against us upon the Colonial question⁷⁰.” Although Russia, Prussia, and Austria appreciated the principles espoused by the Spanish and gave Spain moral support, they did not have an interest in trying to restore a failed monarch to his colonial possessions. Given the ambivalence of the French and the intransigence of the British, these designs eventually came to naught.

Canning and the British were concerned about this turn of events. Canning told his ambassador in Madrid that while in the call for a Congress “employment of force, by the Powers invited to the Conference, is not plainly indicated, it is not distinctly disclaimed⁷¹.” The British could not countenance a foreign power sending soldiers over to quell rebellion in the Americas. Any soldiers sent over, would probably never leave and could lead to hostile powers encroaching on an area of the world the British were dominant. In order to prevent any Congress from being formed to deal with the question of Latin America, Canning made his own proposal to the Allies. Since the United States had an interest in the affairs of Latin America, Canning wanted them to be invited to any Congress proposed to deal with the issue. Having the United States present would prevent the British from being isolated again in a Congress, and provide an alternative ideological view. Canning wrote that “The effect of the ultra-liberalism of our Yankee co-operators on the ultra-despotism of our Aix la Chapelle allies, gives me just the

⁷⁰Canning, May 1824, in *Britain and the Independence of Latin America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 426.

⁷¹Canning, letter to A’Court Jan 30, 1824, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1823-1824*, 62.

balance that I wanted⁷².” The rest of the Alliance could not accept an invitation to the United States, which Canning had “surmised would be too unpalatable to the champions of monarchical rule to stomach⁷³.” In the end Canning managed to frustrate Spanish plans to open a new Congress, one that probably would not have decided in the interests of Britain.

The possibility of Allied intervention in Latin America, despite the distance and lack of national interests, was not entirely remote. Canning and the British were constantly concerned over possible intervention, and the constant vigilance over the matter greatly reduced the likelihood of such an event. The British perceived a threat to the Americas in most everything happening in Spain: for instance when the Russians offered the Spanish troops, Canning wrote that “This remark ... [refers to] not so much the peace in Europe as to the question between Spain and her colonies⁷⁴.” Nothing came of this offer of troops, but illustrates how wary the British were of foreign interference between Spain and its colonies. These threats of foreign interference pushed Canning closer to a policy of recognition so that the political uncertainty in region could be resolved. Russia, being so remote and having little real interests in the affairs of Latin America, was hardly the main threat to the British.

The French, on the other hand, were entangled in Spanish politics after the occupation. Historically they had much greater influence in the Western Hemisphere, an

⁷²Canning, letter to Bagot Jan 24, 1824, in *George Canning and Friends*, 217.

⁷³Hinde, *George Canning*, 356.

⁷⁴Canning, letter to Granville Feb 14, 1825, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 232-233.

influence they might wish to reassert. The French monarchy was still extremely unpopular, and could potentially use foreign adventure to shore up domestic support. The French navy could not challenge the British on the seas, but still represented the greatest potential threat to British naval hegemony at that time. For these reasons Canning was always the most sensitive to French meddling. As seen above, Canning had stipulated that British neutrality in the French occupation of Spain depended on the French leaving the Americas alone. In the Polignac Memorandum, the French had declared they had no interests in colonial expansion into the New World. Despite these assurances, Canning did not trust the French to remain uninvolved. This issue was critical for the peace of Europe as well, for war between Britain and France over the Americas would have torn the Quintuple Alliance apart.

Canning and the British were most troubled over the potential for the French to take Cuba from the Spanish. Cuba was of great strategic importance for the Caribbean. It lay right on the trade winds leading to Europe, which is why the Spanish had made Havana a gathering point for the treasure fleets. It also commanded the narrow straits between Cuba and Florida, and Cuba and Mexico. Cuba had not revolted against Spanish rule though. Cuba's large slave population and fear of following the path of Haiti had prevented a split. The Spanish had used Cuba as a base of operations to attack the revolutionaries on the mainland. The concern was the Spanish were willing to part with Cuba either as a reward for restoring the Bourbons in Spain, or helping to put down revolutionaries in other parts of Latin America.

Canning considered it unacceptable for any other power to gain control of Cuba:

he wrote to his ambassador in Paris to “represent to Villele the impossibility of our allowing France ... to meddle in the internal affairs of that colony [Cuba] ... But what cannot or must not be, is that any great maritime Power should get possession of it⁷⁵.” Canning was unwilling to allow British trade in the Caribbean, or British colonies such as Jamaica to be threatened by a hostile Cuba. Of even greater concern was the potential that France was being pushed into provocative action by the Allies. Canning continues to write that “in that part of the world the alliance ... would probably push him [Villele] on to anything which they hope would compromise him with England⁷⁶.” If in fact the Allies were encouraging France, Britain could not count on any support in curbing France. There is no evidence to suggest that this was the case, but Canning was worried by the possibility and it did influence his decision making process on this matter.

There was reason to believe that France was up to something in the New World , however. On one hand, they had toyed with the possibility of recognition, perhaps hoping to usurp Britain’s commercial position with the new republics. On the other hand they were in close contact with the Spanish crown and seemed to be encouraging him to continue fighting. In the summer of 1825, an incident was reported to the British by the Colombians. It seems that French ships had been used by the Spanish to transport officers and dispatches across the Atlantic. For the British this incident provoked fears of French intervention: Canning wrote that “as it tends to involve France in the contest it

⁷⁵Canning, letter to Granville Jun 21, 1825, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 276.

⁷⁶*Ibid*, 277.

becomes a matter of very serious consequence⁷⁷.” The British worried this could be the prelude to a larger French force being sent to the Americas, or perhaps an attempt to see how diligently the British were watching over the area. The French government disavowed ever having approved such a measure, but Canning did not believe them. In the end, the French did not interfere in the events in Latin America, and recognized the new republics a few years after the British. Yet fears of French meddling in the area helped to push British policy closer towards recognition.

The intractability of the Spanish combined with threat of foreign interference helped Canning overcome domestic opposition to recognition. While the Ultras still did not like the idea, Liverpool and Canning finally received the support of the Cabinet to go ahead with it. Recognition was bestowed upon the Latin American republics piecemeal, dependent on the reports of British envoys on the political stability and the lack of any continued Spanish presence. Colombia was the first republic to be recognized on April 18, 1825, through the signing of a commercial treaty which recognized the new Colombian government⁷⁸. Canning made sure these treaties gave no special preference to British trade over that of other nations, in order to avoid the appearance of having sold recognition for economic advantage. More importantly they signified that Britain accepted the new countries and would in the future accept their representatives at court. Shortly afterwards Venezuela and Buenos Aires [Argentina] signed similar treaties. Other nations, like Peru and Mexico, still were fighting off Spanish forces and

⁷⁷Canning, letter to Granville Jul 8, 1825, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 280.

⁷⁸Commercial Treaty with Colombia Apr 18, 1825, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825*, p 661.

recognition would not occur until after Canning's death. Yet he had established a procedure for recognition that be applied eventually to all the new states of Latin America.

In Europe there was surprisingly little consequence to Canning's policy in the Americas. The Netherlands followed Britain's lead and quickly recognized the republics. Spain of course protested, but the other Powers of the Quintuple Alliance were perfectly willing to accept the situation. As will be seen below, much of this had to do with the changing configuration of the Alliance, with Russia and France more conciliatory towards Britain. By the end of Canning's ministry, France, too, had begun to recognize the Latin American states, although it would take over a decade after British recognition for the Spanish to finally concede to the independence of its colonies. Unfortunately for the new republics, they did not become like the United States, but instead followed the path of political and social instability of Spain. Britain had successfully maintained its economic advantage in Latin America, and would continue to be the chief trading partner for these new nations until it was supplanted by the United States in the late nineteenth century.

In the New World, Canning had been able to maintain Britain's position of dominance through a tumultuous revolution. His policy had prevented any other Great Power from asserting itself, had created amicable conditions with the United States through common policy, and had helped stabilize the new republics and assure British commercial relations with them. His foreign policy in this part of the world was his greatest achievement. He had once again stood up against his partners in the Quintuple

Alliance, and asserted British interests. Liberals across Europe praised Canning for recognizing the new republics, while the new states commemorated Canning in street names and statues. Perhaps most importantly, Canning's policy helped keep Latin America in the economic and cultural orbit of Europe during a time of revolution, violence, and bitter ideological division.

CHAPTER FOUR – GREECE AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Eastern Question is one of the great dilemmas of modern European history. British statesmen tried a variety of methods to solve the problem, from the Crimean War to the imperialistic takeover of Egypt. From the Battle of Vienna in 1683 until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the problem persisted in Central Europe and the Balkans over what exactly was to be done with the territory the Ottomans were no longer capable of holding. Closely linked to this question were issues over the expansion of Russia southwards and the growing nationalism of various ethnic groups across the region. These questions over nationality, religion, and politics were never really successfully resolved even to this day. During the 1820s the major problem facing European policymakers was over a revolt in Greece against the Ottomans that threatened to embroil Russia in yet another in a long series of wars against the Ottoman Empire.

The British had major interests at stake in the Eastern Mediterranean. The major source of concern was over the Straits, the narrow channels connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Ottoman control of the Straits guaranteed that Russian naval forces could not access the Mediterranean Sea. Russian ambitions to conquer Constantinople jeopardized the British position. The major reason the British needed to control the Mediterranean was access to India. Even before the Suez Canal, the British were moving goods from India through the region. The Ottoman Empire was not seen as a threat, but Britain could not allow a Great Power to control the region and possible choke off trade to the east.

Also the expansion of Russia southwards threatened to upset the balance of power

that helped to guarantee peace. The revolt in Greece had ideological issues entangled, while also calling to mind images of religious wars and ancient Greek culture. Unlike in Latin America, or even Spain to some degree, all the Great Powers had a deep interest in seeing the matter in Greece resolved for the sake of maintaining the balance of power. The situation had the potential to embroil Europe in another general war. As shown above, Britain had been isolated within the Quintuple Alliance over the issues of Spain and Latin America. The diplomacy that occurred in the course of trying to settle the Greek insurgency changed Britain's position within the alliance dramatically. Canning was able to break Russia away from the orbit of Metternich and Austria, and to bring France into their group. Together these three nations acted to end Ottoman operations in Greece and bring about a virtually independent Greek state. Yet even these efforts could not prevent Russia from declaring war shortly after Canning's death and biting away further at the edges of the Ottoman Empire. Canning's policy helped to end the short term crisis over Greece and reconfigure the Quintuple Alliance in Britain's favor, but did not manage to resolve the deeper issues surrounding the Eastern Question. In fact Canning's cousin Stratford Canning played a pivotal role in the future Crimean War over many of the same issues in 1853.

Stalemate and Neutrality

The Ottoman Empire was a vast realm encompassing the heartland of Islam. It spread from Northern Africa into the Arabian Peninsula and Mesopotamia, up into the Caucasus and westward into the Balkans. During the early modern period, the Ottoman Empire had been a rapacious power conquering the Byzantines and reaching the gates of Vienna in the heartland of Europe twice. Yet by the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire had fallen behind western powers militarily, technologically, and economically. They had lost Hungary and Crimea to Austria and Russia respectively. Despite these drawbacks, the Empire could still put a sizable army on the field with weapons comparable to other Powers. Nonetheless, the Ottomans felt compelled to call upon their nearly independent vassal in Egypt to help quell the Greek uprising. Mehemet Ali was promised a separate vassalage in Greece, and sent his son Ibrahim Pasha to the Peloponnese with an army. With this force, the Ottomans significantly outnumbered the Greeks and managed to field armies in both northern Greece and on the southern peninsula.

In 1821 the Greeks began a revolt to throw off the Ottomans. The Greeks were at a great disadvantage numerically to the Ottoman forces and relied mainly on guerilla tactics. This type of warfare was ideally suited for the rugged terrain of Greece with its many mountains. The Ottomans garrisons were able to hold onto most of the key fortifications through Greece, and the long coastlines and their naval superiority allowed them to supply their forces effectively through much of northern Greece. Greek raiders

and narrow mountainous passes prevented the Ottoman forces from operating effectively in the Peloponnese. The war turned into a stalemate, with neither side able to achieve victory⁷⁹.

The Greek revolutionary government barely controlled any of the countryside, and had virtually no money or sources of revenue. They had to rely on outside aid and plundered Ottoman resources to maintain the war effort. Commanders of the Greek armies also routinely ignored the dictates of the fledgling government. The Ottomans also suffered from problems with its army, which was multinational in character and relied on vassals such as Mehemet Ali's Egyptian forces and Armenian mercenaries. The Sultan was also in the process of trying to modernize his military. In the middle of the war the Porte decided to disband the legendary Janissaries, which led to a violent clash that decimated what remained of this group. All of these factors led to a prolonged struggle in which neither side could claim victory. Meanwhile Europe watched the struggle unwilling to get involved for the time being.

The British were in a position to feel the effects of this war immediately. Greek ships were turning to piracy. British subjects were raising funds and sending experts to aid the Greeks. The British protectorate over the Ionian Islands also put them in close proximity to the conflict. Canning responded to these pressures from the war by trying to stay neutral as far as possible. So while Canning recognized the Greeks as belligerents, to protect British shipping, he also prohibited British subjects from taking part in the

⁷⁹ David Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom: The Greek War of Independence 1821-1833* (London: John Murray, 2001), see 79-83 for land war, and 89-92 for war at sea.

war.⁸⁰ Britain could not go to war to help the Ottomans because of domestic disapproval. Neither could Canning aid the Greeks and risk undermining the Ottoman Empire. Neutrality also gave Britain more credence in trying to mediate a solution and keep the Russians at bay.

The rest of the European powers faced a dilemma in trying to respond to the Greek revolt. On the one hand these were revolutionaries trying to grab power from a legitimate monarch. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars had conditioned the rulers of Europe to abhor such acts. Yet the Ottoman Empire was not quite a European power, and the Greeks were not entirely Jacobins. Another theme running through the revolt was Christians trying to fight back the Muslim invaders in Europe. The Greek revolutionaries intermixed the two themes in their language and appeals, only causing further confusion. One finds speeches in the Greek National Assembly using the language of the French Revolution concerning human rights, will of the people, and nationalism. Yet the same speech could be laced with calls to drive back “barbarous Enemy of Christ⁸¹.” This part of the message struck a chord with Christian Europe and especially among Orthodox Russians. Alongside these themes was a sympathy among many of the elites of Europe for Greece due to its ancient past. Even though modern Greece was a very different place, this land had been the cradle of Western Civilization and was now in the hands of ‘infidels’. The Greek Revolution touched upon many different issues from the political to the religious to the intellectual.

⁸⁰ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy*, 52.

⁸¹ Proclamation by Panoutzos Notaras to Greek National Assembly (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825*, 1063.

An important aspect of the Greek revolt was the support that they received from all over Europe from sympathetic supporters. Philhellenic societies sprung up across Britain and the Continent which raised money through membership fees and donations for the cause of Greek independence. They not only raised money for the rebels, but managed to smuggle in arms as well. The more devoted Europeans traveled to Greece to take part in the conflict. The most famous of these was Lord Byron, inspired by the romantic ideal of fighting for Greece. His death in Greece raised the profile of the struggle and inspired others to follow his example. Yet more important than poets for the Greek cause were the former British and French army personnel who trained and commanded their forces. Even while European governments claimed neutrality in the conflict, their people were acting on their own accord for the Greeks. This moral and material support was invaluable for the Greeks, sustaining their war effort and holding out the hope for eventual official foreign assistance⁸².

All of these issues were disconcerting for the Great Powers of Europe, but of much more importance were the strategic consequences of the Greek Revolt. These strategic interests had little to do with Greece itself, but revolved more around the future of the Ottoman Empire and Russia. All the European powers wanted to preserve the balance of power, and the potential for Russian interference over Greece threatened the settlement at the Congress of Vienna. Only Prussia had little interest in the region being so far away with no interests beyond Europe to protect. France had commercial ties to the Levantine, but was also rather removed from the region. Both of these nations did not

⁸² Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom*, 139-142.

want to alienate themselves from Russia, and tended to support Russia in any measure short of war. Austria had a profound interest in the Balkans and the future of the Ottoman Empire. Their Hungarian border touched upon the Ottomans and the Russians. They themselves had played a major role in driving the Ottomans back, but were much more worried about Russian expansion into the region. Metternich wanted to keep a viable Ottoman Empire intact in order to check Russian expansion. Yet the Austrian Empire had not recovered yet from the Napoleonic Wars. It was deep in debt and could not afford another war. Austria faced revolutionary threats from Italy and parts of its German holdings, not to mention the long-standing dissatisfaction of the Hungarians. Metternich was having difficulty maintaining Austrians position as it was, and saw the Greek revolt as yet another threat to the stability of the region.

The Russian Empire was in a very different position than Austria in many respects. While having suffered widespread devastation as well during the Napoleonic Wars, Russia had come out of the wars with the largest army in Europe by a large margin. For Russia, the declining Ottoman Empire was an opportunity for expansion. The history of Russia consisted of a long struggle to expand, quite often at the expense of its Muslim neighbors. Since the victories of Catherine the Great, the Russian had established a strong presence on the Black Sea. Istanbul controlled the vital straits into the Mediterranean, while Russian history and religion gave further impetus for the conquest of what had been Constantinople. Russia also had a keen interest in the fate of the Balkans, especially over the Slavic and Orthodox areas⁸³. Yet these longstanding

⁸³ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914*, 46-47.

interests of Russia were held in check by Tsar Alexander I. His youthful flirtation with liberalism had given way to an ardent conservatism, influenced by his friend Metternich. Both Metternich and Castlereagh worked extensively to prevent the tsar from interfering in the first year of the Greek revolt. Alexander became convinced that the Greek revolt was just another example of the pernicious influence of revolutionary ideology in Europe, and was reluctant to support the rebels despite widespread approval for them in his empire⁸⁴. The tsar's restraint was only a fragile reassurance to the rest of Europe though, who knew the threat Russia posed if the situation in Greece escalated or got out of hand.

It is important to understand all of these issues and positions in order to comprehend the British policy over the Greek Revolution. The British also shared the other Powers' concern over the expansion of Russia and the threat to the balance of power. The British position in the Mediterranean made things a little different. At this time the British were the major naval power of that sea, with major naval bases at Gibraltar and Malta. During the Napoleonic Wars they had acquired a protectorate over the Ionian Islands, off the west coast of Greece, putting them in very close proximity to the conflict. Russian control of Istanbul, or even military access through the Straits posed a threat to British control of the Mediterranean. The British government was therefore keen to maintain the Ottoman Empire as a buffer zone between the Mediterranean and the Russians. Moreover the British had to protect important trading routes to India, and a cooperative Ottoman trading policy was critical. Although not as critical as later in the century when Britain moved into Egypt and began work on the Suez Canal, the region

⁸⁴ Ibid, 49-51.

nonetheless was an important artery to the richest colony for Britain. All said, Britain had key interests at stake in the contest, and played a vital role in how events would unfold in the Greek Revolt.

When the insurrection in Greece began in 1821, Castlereagh and the British government had decided that the best policy was one of strict neutrality. The Russians had protested the Ottomans treatment of Greece and the Danubian principalities. On Easter 1821, the Ottomans had the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church murdered, followed by seven bishops and thousands of other Greeks in Istanbul⁸⁵. The Russians recalled their ambassador from Istanbul as a consequence, raising the fear that war was imminent. The rest of the Alliance took no official action, and treated the Greeks as other revolutionaries in Europe. The Greek representative was even denied entrance to the Congress of Verona at Metternich's insistence.

When Canning took the post of foreign minister in 1822, he followed the policy of Castlereagh in respect to Greece. Canning compared British neutrality to the position taken in respect to Latin America: "the like neutrality has been observed by Great Britain in the contest now raging in Greece. The Belligerent Rights of the Greeks have been uniformly respected⁸⁶." The British did not interfere with the uprising, but they blocked arms shipments, tried to prevent British military advisors, and provided no aid. Early on during Canning's ministry, he wrote that "I have not uttered a wish for the Greeks,

⁸⁵ Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom*, 104-106.

⁸⁶Canning. letter to Radios Dec 1, 1824, in *British and Foreign State Papers 1824-1825*, 902.

because they, right or wrong, are the assailants⁸⁷.” This opinion held true for Canning through much of his time in office. He did not really concern himself with the ideological or religious issues surrounding the conflict, so much as the fact that it was a rebellion that threatened a state friendly and strategically important to Britain. While not exactly supporting the Ottomans in the conflict, the British refused Greek requests for aid in their struggle.

Canning was much more worried about Russian entrance into the conflict than any other aspect of the Revolution. Strangford, the British envoy to Istanbul, was serving double duty as a conduit for the Russians. He considered the possibility of war as high: “I have no doubt that at this moment the danger of war is greater than ever⁸⁸.” Canning agreed with these sentiments. Although he tried to mediate a normalization of relations between the Russians and the Ottomans, he doubted the intentions of the Russians. In 1824 Canning wrote “That Russia means force I have little doubt, but she had cautiously avoided saying so⁸⁹.” All his efforts at diplomacy over this matter were focused on preventing the Russians from going to war. Yet until 1826 no resolution was achieved, The Porte was unwilling to compromise over Greece or the Danubian Principalities. Russia refused to drop its requests, but was unwilling to go to war either with the rest of the Alliance advising constraint. Meanwhile the Greek insurgents were slowly being pushed back by Ibrahim Pasha.

⁸⁷*George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 181.

⁸⁸Strangford, letter to Canning Aug 1823, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 191.

⁸⁹Canning, letter to Liverpool Nov 1824, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 203.

Great Britain in this early phase of the crisis, was almost alone in trying to mediate a solution. France and Prussia did not want to see Russia go to war, but at the same time did not want to ruin relations with Russia by trying restrain it. Austria privately told Britain that they supported British efforts, but publicly could not break with Russia especially given the close relationship of Metternich and Alexander. Canning understood the Austrians were in a difficult situation. He wrote that “Metternich is very angry, and threatens Russian hostilities against Turkey - threatens us, that is, but is much more alive to the danger for himself⁹⁰.” Austria knew that war between Russia and the Ottomans was not in its interests, but was unwilling to risk the Holy Alliance and the influence he had with the tsar over the matter. Great Britain was alone in really trying to deter the Russians. Canning vented to Liverpool that the Greek question “is full of peril and plague; and the more so as the whole brunt of the business is laid on our shoulders⁹¹.” It must be remembered that these events were contemporaneous to the French intervention in Spain, and Great Britain was being isolated within the Quintuple Alliance. As events unfolded in Greece, Canning was able to change this situation and create one much more favorable to British interests.

⁹⁰Canning, letter to Granville Jan 10, 1825, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 231.

⁹¹Canning, letter to Liverpool Oct 1824, in *George Canning and Friends*, ed. Bagot, 177.

Shifting Alliances and Intervention

On December 1, 1825, Tsar Alexander I of Russia unexpectedly died of typhus. Nicholas I, Alexander's brother, ended up succeeding him on the throne, but he had a very different personality than his late brother. He lacked the Western polish of his brother, and ruled in much more autocratic Muscovite manner. He did not like Metternich, who had been somewhat successful at restraining the former tsar. Nicholas I did not have as much of an attachment to Greece as his brother had, but was more aggressive in general. Ideologically, he was even more conservative than Alexander, even gaining the nickname 'gendarme of Europe'. Yet in the early years of his reign, he emphasized Russian interests over ideological concerns. The ascension of Nicholas I to the throne of Russia changed the entire equation for Greece and the Ottoman Empire.

The second event that changed the situation for the Great Powers was probably only a rumor, but one with dire enough consequences to provoke action. The Greek Revolution had been a bloody affair from the beginning, pitting religious and ethnic groups against one another. The Ottomans and their Egyptian allies had used scorched earth tactics in order to weaken support for the insurgents. Both sides had committed atrocities in the war, but the European powers were more sensitive to acts done by the infidel Ottoman Empire. Since the entry of the Egyptians into the conflict, Ibrahim Pasha had successfully reduced most of the Greek fortresses and had a free rein in the Peloponnese. Yet he had failed to subdue the insurrection, which lent credence to the idea that he might change his strategy.

Canning heard of a new plan from the Russians, alleging that Ibrahim Pasha was going to begin a new policy of what amounted to ethnic cleansing. The Greek inhabitants were to be enslaved or relocated, replaced by Arab Muslims⁹². Somehow this plan was leaked and publicized widely, horrifying the British people and invigorating campaigns to aid the Greeks. If this plan were true, the European Powers could not sit idly by while the Ottoman Empire butchered its Christian subjects. Yet it is extremely doubtful that this plan was true. There is no evidence on the Ottomans side that they really intended to carry out such a bloody program, especially considering the effect it would have on the rest of their Christian subjects⁹³. As the rumor seems to have started in Russia, more likely it was a ploy by the Russians to gather support for intervention. Despite the truth of the matter, it weighed heavily on policymakers and helped to push Britain and France closer to intervention.

Faced with a changing Russian policy and the possibility of Ottoman outrages, Canning changed the direction of his own policy. The fundamental interests of Great Britain had not altered, Canning still wanted a viable Ottoman Empire and a halt to Russian expansion southwards. Yet given the new circumstances, Canning was forced to change his approach. Given the popularity of the Greeks in Britain, Canning could not side with the Ottomans as Britain would thirty years later in the Crimean War. The Power with perhaps the most common interests concerning Greece was Austria. Metternich had proven unwilling to break with Russia over the issue or countenance the

⁹²Canning, letter to Granville Apr 25, 1826, in *Some Official Correspondence of George Canning*, 34.

⁹³Hinde, *George Canning*, 407.

creation of Greek state, which seemed increasingly like the only way to resolve the war. Yet Canning needed some way to influence Russia and convince the Ottomans to end their war in Greece.

Canning decided that the best way to deal with the crisis was closer cooperation with Russia. In 1826, Wellington visited St. Petersburg for the coronation of Nicholas, beginning discussions over Greece. These talks led to the St. Petersburg protocol, in which the British and Russians demanded the Porte recognize an autonomous Greece under the suzerainty of the Ottomans. Canning had changed policy quite dramatically on making these demands, from a position of neutrality to one of advocating the Greek cause. Unlike Latin America, where Canning was recognizing a *fait accompli*, in Greece Canning was supporting the side losing the conflict. In effect, the Russians and British were taking the Greek side and trying to impose a settlement on the Ottomans. Giving Ottomans nominal control would prevent foreign powers from exerting influence but was clearly not to the benefit of The Porte. Canning hoped working with the Russian would prevent a war from breaking out, and created a united front would convince the Ottomans to give in to their demands. Unfortunately the Ottomans refused to grant Greece autonomy, but were willing to concede to some Russian demands, in the Convention of Akkerman, involving Orthodox subjects in the Danubian Principalities and Serbia⁹⁴.

The St. Petersburg Protocol had much wider significance for British diplomacy and the Quintuple Alliance, for it marked an end to British isolation within the Alliance and a Russian break with the Holy Alliance. Once the protocol was leaked, Metternich

⁹⁴ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914*, 53.

was furious. Yet part of the failure was due to Metternich's policy, which had relied on his personal relationship with Alexander to restrain Russia. The Russians now intended to pressure the Ottomans, with or without British support. Canning was hoping that British co-operation would moderate Russian demands and give him some leverage over Russian actions. Nonetheless, the structure of the balance of power in Europe had changed dramatically with the ascension of Nicholas. For the rest of Canning's ministry it would be Austria that found itself increasingly isolated.

The Ottoman concessions appeased Russia for the time being, but the Greek war still raged on. In fact the situation was growing more desperate for the Greeks, as Ibrahim Pasha's forces were driving them deeper into the countryside. Canning was busy trying to gain further support for his new position on Greece, and managed to find a friendly ear in France. As had been seen, France had been on the opposite side Britain of almost every issue during Canning's ministry, from Spain to Latin America. Yet he was still more than willing to work with them. During an 1826 visit to Paris, Canning managed to bring the French successfully into the fold over Greece. The result was the Treaty of London, signed by France, Russia, and Britain in 1827. These were the last few months of Canning's life, and he had taken over as prime minister while appointing Dudley as foreign minister.

The Treaty of London was a classical example of Great Power politics. The three signatory powers virtually decided among themselves a solution to the problems in Greece and threatened force to achieve it. The treaty called "for the object of re-establishing peace among the Contending Parties, by means of an arrangement called for,

no less by sentiments of humanity, than by interests for the tranquility of Europe⁹⁵.”

Right in the introduction, the treaty recognized that the Greek situation was a threat to general peace in Europe and alludes to humanitarian motives, perhaps referring to the rumors of repopulation. The Powers called for a mainly autonomous Greece, where the leaders would be nominated by the Porte and then selected by the Greeks. Greece would pay tribute to the Ottomans and be forced to return property dispossessed during the war. The proposed solution was almost identical to the St. Peterburg Protocol, but an additional article added teeth the Treaty. It called upon both the Greeks and Ottomans to accept the terms of the treaty, and threatened restrained intervention in the case of either party refusing to agree:

the said High Powers intend to exert all the means which circumstances may suggest to their prudence, for the purpose of obtaining the immediate effects of the Armistice of which they desire, by preventing as far as possible, all Collision between the Contending Parties ... without, however, taking part in the hostilities between the Two Contending Parties⁹⁶.

The three powers agreed that they were willing to take action in order to impose their settlement upon Greece and the Ottomans. This stance was especially provocative towards the Ottomans, as it gave Greeks much of what they wanted at a time when their forces were doing poorly. Also the Ottomans, particularly the Egyptians in the south of Greece, relied more heavily upon naval supply lines. It would be upon the sea that the issue between the powers and the Ottomans came to a head in open hostilities.

⁹⁵Treaty of London (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1826-1827* (London: James Ridgeway and Sons, 1854), 633.

⁹⁶*Ibid*, 637.

The Treaty of London also signified a major shift within the Quintuple Alliance. The great powers that had been aligned against Britain since the Congress of Verona, now realigned. France, Russia, and Britain were working together closely while Austria, who had been invited to London but declined, was now left on the sidelines. While Prussia still supported Austria, it had little influence outside of central Europe. What made Russia and France ideal partners for Britain was that these were the only powers with significant navies. France and Russia also began to show more respect for other areas of British policy, for the French and Russians accepted the new Portuguese Constitution. This cooperation was tentative though, for an overly aggressive Russia could easily upset everything or a change in policy or government in any power. In fact the alignment did not survive the 1830 Revolution in France. Yet overall the change meant the end of the Holy Alliance and greatly reduced the importance of the Quintuple Alliance altogether. Increasingly diplomacy became more like typical Great Power behavior, with shifting alliances more than overarching ideological fronts.

George Canning died a month after the Treaty of London was signed, but the fight over Greek Independence would continue for five more years. His change in policy and diplomatic efforts to enact a peace ensured that Ottoman rule did not continue in Greece. The allied Powers sent orders to their commanders in the Mediterranean to enforce the Treaty of London, which resulted in the 1827 Battle of Navarino. The Greeks had accepted the Treaty of London, but the Ottomans still rejected it and sought to win the war militarily. The French, Russian, and British squadrons in the Mediterranean converged outside Navarino, a major port for incoming Ottoman and Egyptian supplies.

The allied fleet sent communications to Ibrahim Pasha hoping to convince him to accept the “propositions which were to the advantage of the Grand Signor himself⁹⁷.”

Codrington, the British admiral, was under orders not to engage the Ottoman fleet unless attacked. Yet the allied fleet took a provocative position blocking the harbor. On October 20, 1827 the combined Ottoman and Egyptian fleets attacked the allied fleet positioned in the bay. Even though the allied fleets were outnumbered four to one, their ships were larger and better built. Their crews were also much better trained and experienced from the Napoleonic Wars. The result of the battle was the almost complete annihilation of the Ottoman and Egyptian Mediterranean fleets⁹⁸.

The battle did not end the war immediately either, but the Ottomans were now in a desperate situation. Their forces in the Peloponnese were cut off from supply lines, and there was a danger that Russia could enter the war at any time. The Greeks enjoyed a moral victory on the backs of the Allied powers, and realized that they needed to advance rapidly in order to hold as much territory as possible when a peace would be imposed. The Ottomans still refused to negotiate though, despite British and French entreaties. Russia, still dissatisfied over the Ottomans, declared war with them in 1828 and marched almost to Istanbul by 1829. The Russians were restrained by the other European Powers, and only gained small territory along the border of the Crimea and the Caucasus. The Ottomans also agreed to an autonomous Greece. So despite Canning’s attempts to prevent a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, one finally broke out only a year

⁹⁷Protocol after action at Navarino (trans), in *British and Foreign State Papers 1826-1827*, 1051-1052.

⁹⁸Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom*, 333-335.

after his death. Fortunately it was a limited war and Russia did not try to dismantle the Empire, but it served to further exacerbate the festering Eastern Question. The Greeks too were not entirely happy with their lot from the Treaty of London, and continued resisting the Ottomans resulting in their complete independence in 1832. The Powers relented only when they convinced the Greeks to establish a monarchy.

Canning's policy in terms of the Greeks and the Ottoman Empire yielded mixed results, but had important consequences for the region. The Greeks gained eventual independence, but that had not been a goal of Canning. In fact it only served to further undermine the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Russia in the end went to war with the Ottomans, so Canning's policy of working with the Russians to restrain them was not successfully either. Both the British and French realized they had no leverage to restrain the Russians⁹⁹. The Battle of Navarino had garnered prestige for the British navy, but it had been one Canning had hoped to avoid by putting pressure on the Ottoman Empire until it relented. Yet the Ottomans had proved more intractable than anyone had imagined. On the face of it, Canning's policy in this area was unsuccessful, but if one looks at the larger strategic concerns he had achieved some results.

The greatest concern over a general war sparked by Russian aggression had been avoided and the hottest points of crisis resolved even though it had been to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. The greatest gain of Canning was the realignment of the alliance system. No longer was Britain in the minority concerning major issues affecting the Great Powers. While the death of Alexander had played a pivotal role in changing the

⁹⁹ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914*, 53-55.

relations among the powers, Canning was adept enough to see an opportunity and take advantage of it. By the end of his life Canning had become celebrated among liberals for his policies, including supporting Greek independence, which were not in actuality his real intentions. He was given credit for helping checkmate Metternich and the Holy Alliance, but his aims were far from ideological. Canning had established a close working relationship with the most autocratic of all European states. They had then imposed a settlement on a friendly state, and had even crushed the Ottoman fleet. He had acted on what he saw as the national interests of Britain. So while he had helped achieve Greek independence, his real goal was to end the conflict and prevent Russian intervention. While his diplomatic maneuvering had divided the formerly close relationship between Austria and Russia, it was motivated by Great Power politics more than any ideological commitment to liberalism. Nonetheless Canning enjoyed widespread popularity for his achievements by the end of his life within Britain and throughout certain groups in Europe.

CONCLUSION

Diplomacy is a difficult art requiring the statesman to balance policy objectives with the reality of events on the ground. Policy itself must be carefully managed to achieve desired results and ensure domestic support. The nineteenth century was a very difficult period for statesmen; the French Revolution had brought nationalism and liberalism to the fore threatening the dynastic states of Europe. Throughout the first half of the century revolution was a constant threat culminating in the massive Revolution of 1848. Even for a stable and relatively liberal state as Great Britain, revolution posed a massive challenge to foreign policy. Should Britain actively support the status quo and subdue any signs of revolutionary activity to ensure the balance of power? Did Britain have an interest in seeing more liberalism on the Continent and then actively support revolution? Or could Britain afford to ignore continental Europe altogether while it built up its overseas empire? These were the challenges Britain faced not only in the period discussed in this paper, but throughout most of the Nineteenth Century. Periodic revolution in France, the unification of Germany and Italy, and the fragmentation of polyglot empires such the Ottomans and Austrians tested the foreign policy of Britain.

Castlereagh had responded to these threats emanating from Revolutionary France by co-operating closely with the other powers in an attempt to secure the balance of power in Europe. During the congress of Vienna, he had pushed for congresses and the Quadruple Alliance. Castlereagh had worked closely with Metternich, and was on very good terms with all the major courts of Europe. He had been forced by domestic pressures to refrain from supporting the Quintuple Alliance in intervening in revolutions

in Italy and Spain, but had managed to retain close ties with those powers. Castlereagh had in fact strayed from the traditional foreign policy of Britain. He had inserted Britain into the heart of European politics through the Congress of Vienna, and had maintained that position throughout his life.

As has been seen, Canning had taken a very different approach. He had openly opposed the measures of the Congress of Verona at the very beginning of his tenure. He continued to distance Britain from its continental allies. He pursued a foreign policy that emphasized specifically British interests, rather than larger European interests. Even though his policy was not substantially different than Castlereagh's in substance, the style was very different. For example Castlereagh would never have criticized the French king as poignantly as Canning did before French intervention in Spain. Canning made Britain's differences with the Continent obvious and public. Where Castlereagh had downplayed the differences, Canning openly declared them.

These differences in policy reflected the very privileged position Britain had in respect to the continent. Britain's insular position protected them from any threat short of a hegemonic power like Napoleon. Their system of government had already incorporated many liberal ideas, and was itself a goal for some revolutionaries across the Channel. There was not major revolutionary movement in Britain throughout the entire nineteenth century. The only major reform group was the Chartists who had relied on non-violent methods. Nationalism was also not a major threat to the British state. English culture had dominated the state, with enough of a nod towards Scottish identity to keep the union together. Irish nationalism was a threat, but not an existential one for the British state.

Britain, therefore, was in a unique position to withstand the onslaught of liberalism and nationalism that swept across Europe from 1789-1848.

Traditional British foreign policy had emphasized maintaining a balance in power in Europe, while trying to stay aloof of every conflict which erupted. The British were not interested in gaining territory in Europe, but rather expanding their colonial empire across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The British had entered into alliances and fought wars in Europe, but these were limited in their scope. For example during the two major European wars of the eighteenth century, Britain had used subsidies to allies rather than their own troops to fight on the continent. During the Seven's Years War and War of Austrian Succession, British soldiers fought in the Americas while their allies took the brunt of continental warfare. Only when a power threatened to upset the balance of power, as Louis XIV had, did Britain become more fully involved on the continent. These traditional policies had served Britain well up until the time of the French Revolution. Their major enemy France had been contained within Europe. The British colonial empire continued to grow, and British naval dominance increased.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars forced Britain to change policy to deal with a new threat from the continent. Napoleon's Empire destroyed the balance of power in Europe, and posed a threat of invasion across the Channel. In order to deal with the threat of Napoleon, the British were forced to take a more active role on the continent. The Peninsular War saw British troops facing the enemy on the continent, albeit in support of Spanish guerillas. Britain sought the support of every nation aligned against Napoleon, and in the end defeated Napoleon through a combined effort from Britain,

Russia, Austria, and Prussia. The victory over Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna had established very close relations between the powers. Castlereagh saw these close ties as a guarantee against future aggressors. He sought to establish a system where no power could achieve the hegemony of Napoleon again. The Congress of Vienna was a departure from traditional British foreign policy, pushing Britain onto the continent in a way it had never been before, and which it was not totally comfortable.

Yet in diplomacy, no one state can dictate events. Castlereagh did not expect what the congress system was to become. Metternich and Alexander used the Congress of Troppau to justify putting down revolution in Italy. The Congress of Verona was an attempt to do the same in Spain. The system Castlereagh had intended to maintain the balance of power, was being used to dictate political ideology in smaller states. Castlereagh could not support these decisions, but at the same time was too attached to these powers to openly oppose them. Canning openly opposed these interventions and the ideology underlying them. By claiming no state had a right to interfere in the domestic political system of another, he was in fact undermining the policy of his allies. Through the Treaty of London, he altered the alignment of the powers away from the Holy Alliance and permanent alliances.

Yet many mistook this change in policy in Britain. Observers saw Canning as a liberal who openly opposed the Metternich and the Holy Alliance. As has been seen, this was hardly his motivation. Canning rather sought to move British policy more in line with the traditional foreign policy it had pursued successfully for over a century. He pursued the traditional interests of Britain, rather than concerning himself over a larger

European perspective. In Spain for instance, he did not want to see France gain influence over the region. He did not recognize that successful revolution in Spain might pose a threat to all of Europe. The ideological struggle that threatened the courts of Europe did not concern Canning. In the same way, the new republics in the Americas were not a threat to Britain, but French seizure of any colonies was a threat to British interests. Canning was most concerned about any power gaining influence to upset the balance of power or British maritime dominance. Yet ideology and revolution was not a threat except that it seemed invite those powers to intervene.

These aspects of Canning's policy can most closely be seen in the case of the Greeks. Canning did not support the Greeks in their Revolution beyond recognizing them as belligerents. He did not want to see the Ottoman Empire weakened, but the major concern was over the reaction of the Russians. Russian aggression could both undermine the balance of power and threaten British interests in the Mediterranean. Canning's policy which led to the Treaty of London recognized Russia as the greatest threat, not revolution or the Greeks. Canning's support for the Greeks was an attempt to appease Russia and prevent war. Throughout the crisis, Canning does not worry about the ideological impact of revolution, but instead the interests of Britain and the balance of power.

Canning's policy was therefore an attempt to pursue a more traditionally British foreign policy. The Napoleonic Wars were an unprecedented event that had disrupted the normal foreign policy of Britain. Castlereagh had sought to ensure British security through closer ties to continental powers. The close ties that had developed during the

last phase of the war continued during the peace, yet these were fraying even during Castlereagh's tenure. The continental powers had sought to use the legitimacy conferred by the congress system to pursue their own security, defined in very different terms than Britain's. Where Britain felt relatively secure from the threat of revolution and nationalism, these were existential threats to France, Austria, and Russia. They were unwilling to allow these threats to fester in neighboring states, especially ones under their protection. Austria considered revolution in Naples a dangerous threat to its position within Italy. Bourbon France likewise considered the Spanish Revolution a threat to its delicate domestic position. By the Congress of Verona, when Canning took office, it had become clear that the interests of Britain and the other continental powers had diverged within Europe. Canning understood during future crises that he could not rely on congresses or the goodwill of the continental powers to ensure the interests of Britain.

Canning's decision to return British foreign policy to its traditional trajectory was not one based on ideology or xenophobia. Rather it was becoming clearer that the congress system and policy Castlereagh had attempted to pursue were not serving the national interests of Britain. Also as the threat of war receded and France became more fully integrated into the alliance, there was no longer an overriding threat to justify British sacrifices. Britain had neither the inclination nor army to act as policeman of Europe for threats it did not consider dangerous. Canning returned to the traditional principles of British foreign policy because the policy of Castlereagh had in fact failed in respect to Britain. Canning disentangled Britain from Europe to a certain degree, and returned Britain to its traditional role in respect to the continent. During the nineteenth

century Britain only became involved in European conflict when British interests were directly threatened. The Crimean War, for example, was a response to a Russian threat to British interests in the Mediterranean and Middle East. The wars of German unification on the other hand did not threaten British interests directly and Britain did not get involved.

Canning therefore represents a kind of reaction in Britain against the close ties that Castlereagh had fostered in Europe, which did not appear to benefit British interests. Perhaps this was somewhat shortsighted, and a closer involvement of Britain may have avoided some of the pitfalls of the nineteenth century. Yet over the long run, Castlereagh's policy was untenable in Britain. Even Castlereagh himself began to move away from then from 1820-1822. Part of Canning's popularity was attributable to this return to a more traditional foreign policy. If he had tried to maintain close ties to Europe, there would have been an eventual backlash within Parliament to foreign entanglements.

The basic underlying problem was that the interests of Britain were not the interests of the continental powers. Britain was concerned over maritime security and access to overseas markets. The continental powers were more directly concerned with security along their land borders, and had more at stake when dealing with their neighbors. The French Revolution had added to security risks of the continental powers by raising the specter of revolution and nationalism. During this period, their interests had diverged even further from Britain. The Napoleonic Wars and the Industrial Revolution only reinforced Britain's commercial and naval interests. While this fact was

lost during the war and its aftermath, it could not remain forever concealed. Canning's foreign policy was a normalization of British policy after the war, reasserting British interests. No alliance or pact can survive divergent interests for long without some sort of common threat or coercion. Britain was in no position to be coerced into any sort of alliance after the Napoleonic Wars.

Diplomacy is a very hard profession, since there are limited options for those practicing it. Foreign states, domestic opinions, and personality all confine the diplomat within a very few narrowly defined options. Canning was not free to pursue whatever foreign policy he desired, he was in fact constrained by many factors. His personality made close co-operation with the continental powers difficult. Their policies in respect to revolution made it even more complicated. Finally the domestic opinion in Britain and the long term interests of the nation made it almost impossible. Canning could not have followed Castlereagh's early policy because he was constrained by too many other factors. Over the long run, it was in the interests of Britain to continue the foreign policy that had been proven successful throughout the eighteenth century and helped to turn a small island nation into a global superpower. Canning was the foreign minister who normalized Britain's relations with the continental powers, but it was perhaps inevitable that Britain could not maintain such close ties. Britain sustained Canning's traditional foreign policy through most of the nineteenth century. Not until the late nineteenth century, when Germany threatened British naval interests, did Britain again enter into a close alliance with continental powers. Canning's foreign policy, while a return to the traditional policies of Britain, set the tone for policy in the nineteenth century.

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